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Redefining through Remembering:
China's Political Objectives as Reflected in Chinese State Commemoration of the Korean War,
1950 - 2010

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HIST 496: The Senior Essay

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction	3
II. Literature Review	6
i) Origins of the Korean War	6
ii) China's Historical Memory of the Korean War	9
iii) Chinese Propaganda Efforts during the Korean War	11
iv) Historical PRC-DPRK Relations	13
III. CCP Commemoration Speeches, 1950 - 2010	16
i) 1950 - 1953: War Period	16
ii) 1954 - 1956: Post-War	21
iii) 1957 - 1958: Improving PRC-DPRK Ties	22
iv) 1960 - Early 1966: Pivot to DPRK	25
v) Later 1966 - 1969: Cultural Revolution	29
vi) 1970 - 1971: Reviving PRC-DPRK Ties	31
vii) 1972 - 1978: U.S.-PRC Rapprochement	33
viii) 1979 - 1989: Pivot to Domestic and Academic Significance	34
ix) 1989 - 1990: Tiananmen Square	37
x) 1993: PRC-ROK Rapprochement	40
xi) 2000: Jiang Zemin's Speech	43
xii) 2010: Xi Jinping's Speech	46
IV. Significance and Conclusions	49
Bibliographic Essay	55
Bibliography	62
I. Primary Sources	62
II. Secondary Sources	63

I. Introduction

The Korean War is a watershed event in the history of the People's Republic of China [PRC] and the geopolitics of East Asia, marking the birth of the so-called “blood alliance” between China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [DPRK], as well as China's first direct military conflict with the United States. Yet despite this historical significance—or perhaps because of it—each participant of the war has portrayed the event in a different light, maintaining significant propaganda efforts since the beginning of the war. In 1950, the Chinese government launched a nationwide propaganda and mobilization movement under the slogan “Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea,” hailing the war a victory against the United States, despite its conclusion with an armistice. Peng Dehuai, leading Marshal of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army [PVA], even remarked that “gone for ever [was] the time when the western powers have been able to conquer a country in the [Far] East merely by mounting several cannons along the coast.”¹

Notwithstanding Peng's remark, the Korean War is not yet gone. Without a peace treaty to mark its end, the Korean War has “lived” on—but not its original conditions of 1950s-level Cold War dynamics. The normalization of U.S.-PRC relations in the 1970s significantly altered China's relations with its Socialist allies and prompted its engagement with non-Socialist states. DPRK's nuclear weapons program, which received worldwide criticism since the 1990s, also led the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] to reconsider its traditional relations with the DPRK, Republic of Korea [ROK], and United States. These changes raise the question: did the CCP change its interpretation of the Korean War, the event that started its involvement in the Korean

¹ Peng Dehuai, Peng's speech at the Twenty-fourth Session of the CPGC, *Peng Dehuai Junshi Wenxuan* [Selected military writings of Peng Dehuai] (Beijing: Central Archives and Manuscripts Press, 1988), 445, cited in Zhang Shu Guang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 248.

peninsula, and if so, what does that imply about the CCP's evolving domestic and regional political objectives?

While the Korean War and China's political campaign surrounding it have been studied extensively in China and beyond, there have been only limited attempts to understand how the Chinese government's interpretation of the war changed over time. Studying the CCP's interpretation of the Korean War can yield valuable insights about how the party views the beginning, development, and future of its relationship with the DPRK, as well as how it positions China vis-a-vis other countries involved in the war—the United States, ROK, the Soviet Union (USSR, now Russia), and Japan. As a case study of how the CCP crafts official historical narratives, the Korean War can also demonstrate how the party communicates to the general public its foreign and domestic political agendas through its use of history.

This paper therefore studies the CCP's changing Korean War narrative and associated domestic and regional policy objectives. The paper examines anniversary speeches by CCP leaders—such as Mao Zedong, Hu Jintao, Jiang Zemin, and Xi Jinping—from 1950, the beginning of the war, to 2010, the year when the last centrally-organized, national-scale Korean War commemoration event was held. The speeches are collected primarily from Chinese newspapers such as the *People's Daily* and the *People's Liberation Army Daily* [PLA Daily], which, as major media outlets for the CCP and the People's Liberation Army [PLA], have the widest circulation and readership in China. This paper also references speeches or publications in selected works of CCP leaders, including Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping.²

This paper argues that the CCP used its Korean War narrative as a propaganda tool for rallying domestic political support and signaling the CCP's perception of its relations with the

² For a full list, please refer to the Primary Source section of the bibliography.

DPRK, ROK, the United States, and the Soviet Union. The Korean War narrative had always responded to domestic needs, initially focused on consolidating the home front, and later on legitimizing the CCP's political rule. Since 1954, the narrative additionally served as an international signaling tool for trumpeting PRC-DPRK relations. This DPRK-oriented message, however, decreased in fervor during the Cultural Revolution and later from 1972 with PRC-U.S. rapprochement, and from the 1990s the narrative's international message expanded to accommodate differing historical narratives of China's new partners, such as the ROK.

Despite these changes, the CCP maintained its portrayal of the United States as China's opponent, intentional ambivalence on who started the war, justification of China's intervention as protecting China's national interests, and emphasis on the "correct leadership" by the CCP. These consistencies suggest that these messages' underlying political objectives are still relevant today: namely, its perception of rivalry with the United States, conciliatory approach to North Korea, the CCP's political correctness and legitimacy, and importance of buffer states in national security.

This essay starts with a literature review, identifying relevant studies and their limitations. It then looks into Korean War anniversary speeches to complement these limitations, evaluating their changes and continuity over time to derive the political message behind the changes and, in cases, lack thereof. The paper concludes with a discussion of the significance of what the speeches tell us about the political objectives of the CCP.

II. Literature Review

Studies on the Korean War have existed since as early as the outbreak of the war itself. Considering the vast amount of existing literature, this paper focuses on a selection of topics from a combination of Chinese, English, and Korean works: the origins of the war; CCP's historical memory about the war; CCP propaganda and mobilization efforts during the war; and the history of PRC-DPRK relations. This review reveals the need for more research on the CCP's usage of the Korean War narrative as a propaganda tool and the party's underlying domestic and international policy objectives during the "afterlife" of the war. To date, to the author's knowledge, no study analyzes the CCP's Korean War commemoration speeches.

i) Origins of the Korean War

The vast majority of works on the Korean War concentrate on understanding the origins of the war. Regarding China, these works aim to answer when China decided to enter the Korean War, and what factors were behind such a decision.

One of the most groundbreaking works on this topic is Allen S. Whiting's 1960 book, *China Crosses the Yalu: the Decision to Enter the Korean War*. Whiting notably disagrees with the then-popular U.S. understanding of the Korean War as an ideological war and the product of the Socialist bloc's expansionist ambitions. Instead, Whiting adopts a more security-oriented approach, claiming that China's intervention more likely budded from "general concern over the range of opportunities within China that might be exploited by a determined, powerful enemy on China's doorstep."³ *China Crosses the Yalu* marks a shift in Korean War research from ideological arguments to security-related analyses about China's motivation for participating in

³ Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: the Decision to Enter the Korean War* (New York, MacMillan: 1960), 159.

the Korean War; however, most of these efforts suffered from a lack of available resources because most governmental internal documents on the Korean War remained classified.⁴

When the PRC and Russia declassified some of their high-level confidential documents in the 1990s, scholarly work on the topic pivoted toward understanding the high diplomacy and decision-making rationale of the three leaders—Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Kim Il-sung. In their paper “China’s Decision to Enter the War: History Revisited,” Hao Yufan and Zhai Zhihai confirm the importance of security concerns from U.S. encroachment on DPRK-PRC borders in Mao’s decision to enter the Korean War.⁵ Hao and Zhai argue that “[i]deology played an important but not an absolute role in Mao’s decision, contrary to the views of most western historians over the past three decades.”⁶ S. N. Goncharov, John Wilson Lewis, and Xue Litai, in their book *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War*, also argue that Mao entered the war due to his perception that the United States’ ultimate goal behind intervening in the Korean War was to threaten China.⁷ In *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War: Trilateral Communist Relations in the 1950s*, Shen Zhihua additionally states that Mao’s decision was motivated by the “Soviet factor,” namely the “compromise of its sovereignty in the Northeast” if the war expanded to the Northeastern region of China and the USSR intervened.⁸ All these scholars focus on the Korean War’s foreign policy aspect: namely, the CCP’s perception that participating in the Korean War would help protect national interests from the threats posed by the USSR or the United States.

⁴ See, for instance, Melvin Gurtov and Hwang Byong-Moo, *China under Threat* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

⁵ Hao Yufan and Zhai Zhihai, “China’s Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited,” *The China Quarterly* 121 (March 1990), 94-115.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 114-115.

⁷ S. N. Goncharov, John Wilson Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 159.

⁸ Shen Zhihua, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War: Trilateral Communist Relations in the 1950s* (Milton Park, Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 175-6.

Some studies, on the other hand, try to bring light to non-security-related factors behind the CCP's decision-making. Chen Jian argues in his book *China's Road to the Korean War* that "China's entry into the Korean War was determined by concerns much more complicated than safeguarding the Chinese-Korean border."⁹ Instead, Chen claims that "three fundamental and interrelated rationales had dominated Beijing's formulation of foreign policy and security strategy: the party's revolutionary nationalism, its sense of responsibility toward an Asian-wide or worldwide revolution, and its determination to maintain the inner dynamics of the Chinese revolution."¹⁰ By focusing on the CCP's self-perception of its ideology and world position, Chen highlights the role of the CCP's domestic motivations to participate in the Korean War. For instance, Chen concludes that CCP propaganda during the war aimed at "chang[ing] the external pressure caused by the Korean crisis into a driving force for promoting the continuation of the great Chinese revolution."¹¹ By elucidating more domestically-driven objectives behind China's intervention, Chen ties the Korean War directly with domestic political ideology as opposed to the CCP's international threat perception.

While these works collectively help trace the motivations behind China's entering the Korean War, their focus on high politics and the CCP's internal decision-making process bars them from studying the ways in which CCP leaders communicated their goals to the masses. A handful of studies that looked into CCP propaganda efforts, such as Whiting's and Chen's works, demonstrate how such propaganda reflected and communicated the party's objectives to the domestic public; they are, however, very limited in their time scopes, not covering the changes of

⁹ Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: the Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 4.

¹⁰ Ibid., 213-4.

¹¹ Ibid., 193.

CCP perception and objectives toward North Korea in the afterlife of the war.

ii) **China's Historical Memory of the Korean War**

Another significant portion of literature addresses historical memory and commemoration in China. By studying major creators (and creations) of historical memory such as museums, veterans, and textbooks, these studies describe the CCP's efforts to use China's history toward its political goals and how these goals changed over time.¹²

Among scholars studying the CCP's historical commemoration of the Korean War, Jung Keun-Sik notably researched the Memorial of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, China's predominant museum on the Korean War, tracing its creation and its historical narrative.¹³ Jung states that the construction of the Memorial was "most significant within the context of state formation and nation building in China, rather than in the context of international politics," highlighting the domestic propagandistic value that the war holds for the CCP.¹⁴ Regardless of this primary emphasis on domestic factors, Jung also notes that the CCP used the war to position China vis-a-vis the United States and DPRK by underlining the "friendship" between the Chinese and North Korean people while attempting to shift Chinese domestic

¹² This study focuses on works pertinent to the Korean War. Some works that are not covered by this paper but are regardless significant in this field include Neil J. Diamant, *Embattled Glory: Veterans, Military Families, and the Politics of Patriotism in China, 1949-2007* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publications, 2010); Neil J. Diamant, "Veterans, Organization, and the Politics of Martial Citizenship in China," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 8, no. 1 (2008): 119-158, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23418654>; Neil J. Diamant and Kevin J. O'Brien, "Veterans' Political Activism in China," *Modern China* 41, no. 3 (2015): 278-312, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24575609>; and Hung Chang-tai, "The Cult of the Red Martyr: Politics of Commemoration in China," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 2 (2008): 279-304, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30036507>.

¹³ Jung Keun-Sik, "China's Memory and Commemoration of the Korean War in the Memorial Hall of the 'War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea,'" *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, no. 14 (March 2015), 63-90. For studies that include analyses of Korean War exhibition halls in larger museums, please refer to: Kirk A. Denton, *Exhibiting the Past: Historical Memory and the Politics of Museums in Postsocialist China* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014); Rana Mitter, "Behind the Scenes at the Museum: Nationalism, History and Memory in the Beijing War of Resistance Museum, 1987-1997," *The China Quarterly*, no. 161 (2000): 279-293, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/655990>; and Edward Vickers, "Museums and Nationalism in Contemporary China," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education* 37, no. 3 (June 2007): 365-382, DOI: 10.1080/03057920701330255.

¹⁴ Jung, "China's Memory and Commemoration of the Korean War in the Memorial Hall of the 'War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea,'" 70.

perception of the United States from a subject of “worship” and “fear” to a target of “resistance.”¹⁵ Jung thus highlights the Korean War’s propaganda value for the CCP, both in terms of domestic nation-building and international positioning.

Another group of literature focuses on the CCP’s use of textbooks to shape historical memory regarding the two Koreas. For instance, Yu Yong-Tae studies Chinese history textbooks from 1997 to 2001 and argues that China has attempted to accommodate South Korea’s perspectives after the Cold War, even when doing so would conflict with North Korea’s views.¹⁶ On the other hand, Yu mentions that while the Chinese government did not characterize the war as a “liberation war” as the North Korean government does, it nonetheless opted for a limited adoption of the North Korean perspective by not mentioning who started the war (DPRK) and emphasizing the United States as an invader.¹⁷ Yu also highlights that by trumpeting the Korean War as a massive success, the Chinese government aims at relieving Chinese students’ fear of the United States and strengthening their nationalist sentiments.¹⁸

All of these works prove the CCP’s active use of the Korean War’s historical narrative to bolster its political goals, while underscoring key components of that narrative such as the portrayal of the United States as an “invader” or the deliberately ambiguous description of who started the war. These studies, however, suggest several limitations of studying memorials or textbooks. With long timeframes in between renovations—at times shut down for years—the memorial is not fit for fast updates reflecting changes in CCP objectives. As Jung notes, that the memorial is open to visitors of all nationalities additionally compromises the memorial’s

¹⁵ Ibid., 72-73.

¹⁶ Yu Yong-Tae 유용태, “Jungguk yeoksagyogwaseoui hyeondaesa insikgwa gukgajuui: hyeondae hanguksareul jungsimeuro” 중국 역사교과서의 현대사 인식과 국가주의: 현대 한국사를 중심으로 [Modern History Awareness and Nationalism in Chinese History Textbooks: Focusing on Modern Korean History], *The Korean History Education Review* 84 (December 2002): 187-222.

¹⁷ Ibid., 210.

¹⁸ Ibid., 213.

usability as a domestic propaganda tool.¹⁹ Meanwhile, research on textbooks cover few editions of textbooks, providing only a partial picture of the CCP's historiography of the Korean War. The audience of the medium is another limiting factor. Textbooks are geared toward students, which limits their circulation within the broader society and potentially in content to render them more accessible, thus failing to represent the CCP's national propaganda strategy.

iii) Chinese Propaganda Efforts during the Korean War

Studies on Chinese propaganda and mobilization efforts during the Korean War focus mainly on how the CCP used the Korean War as propaganda material to bolster its contemporary political objectives while garnering domestic support to continue war efforts. Several studies investigate public responses to CCP propaganda, what existing public sentiment the CCP harnessed, and the long-term social implications of the propaganda efforts.

One of the seminal English works in this field is Hajimu Masuda's *Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World*.²⁰ Masuda notes that the Chinese masses linked their bitterness toward Japan with their attitude toward the United States, a sentiment that the CCP actively kindled to mobilize the Chinese people during the Korean War. Masuda also describes how the Chinese masses and the state jointly used the Korean War to "purify" the community, eliminating dissent according to their imagined Cold War reality. Masuda thus emphasizes both the Korean War's usefulness to the CCP for domestic consolidation and, in turn, the difficult political context in which the party decided to enter the Korean War.

Additional studies on Korean War propaganda have mainly been conducted by Chinese

¹⁹ Ibid., 67.

²⁰ Hajimu Masuda, *Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2015).

scholars. For instance, in his 2015 study, Zhang Fang investigates methods of media control adopted by the CCP during the Korean War, highlighting the centralized and propagandized nature of news production to ensure that news coverage fit the CCP's political needs.²¹ Studies by Lin Weijing in 2005 and 2007 similarly outline mobilization tactics, content, and methods, including portraying the United States forces as “invaders,” heightening national pride, and trumpeting war martyrs and heroes, all as means of encouraging further public participation in the Korean War efforts.²²

Another important study is Song Jin's research on Deng Xiaoping's interpretation of the Korean War.²³ Song studies characterizations of the Korean War in the *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, identifying themes including the essence of the war, comparison of power between the United States and China, the righteousness of the cause of war, the source of China's threat, and lessons for building Chinese military today.²⁴ This study is one of the very few attempts to understand CCP leaders' changing interpretations of the Korean War over time, and is especially

²¹ Zhang Fang 张放, “Chaoxian zhanzheng zhong de Zhongguo xinwen shengchan (1950 ~ 1953)” 朝鲜战争中的中国新闻生产 (1950 ~ 1953) [Chinese newspaper production during the Korean War (1950 ~ 1953)], *Dangshi Yanjiu yu Jiaoxue* 党史研究与教学, no. 5 (2015): 10-28.

²² Lin Weijing 林伟京, “<Renmin ribao> yu kang Mei yuan Chao zhanzheng zhongde zhengzhidongyuan” 《人民日报》与抗美援朝战争中的政治动员 [*People's Daily* and Political Mobilization during the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea], *Journal of Jiangxi Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)* 江西师范大学学报(哲学社会科学版) 3 (2007): 112-116; Lin Weijing 林伟京, “Shixi kang Mei yuan Chao zhanzheng zhong zhengzhi dongyuande neirong yu fangfa” 试析抗美援朝战争中政治动员的内容与方法 [Analysis of Content and Methods of Political Mobilization during the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea], *Journal of South China Normal University (Social Science Edition)* 华南师范大学学报(社会科学版) 6 (2005): 140-142.

²³ Examples of such studies include Ye Rentao 叶任涛, “Mao Zedong yu kang Mei yuan Chao” 毛泽东与抗美援朝 [Mao Zedong and the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea], *Corpus of Party History* 党史文汇 12 (2000): 12-15; Wu Xiaobao 吴小宝, “Zhou Enlai dui kang Mei yuan Chao zhanzheng suo zuo de zhongyao gongxian” 周恩来对抗美援朝战争所作的重要贡献 [Zhou Enlai's Major Contribution to the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea], *Journal of Zhangzhou Vocational University* 漳州职业大学学报 4 (2001): 9-13; and Zhang Min and Zhang Xiujuan, *Zhou Enlai yu kang Mei yuan Chao zhan zheng* 周恩来与抗美援朝战争 [Zhou Enlai and the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea], 1st edition (Shanghai, China: *Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe*, 2000).

²⁴ Song Jin, “Deng Xiaoping guanyu kang Mei yuan Chao de ruogan shidian tanxi” 邓小平关于抗美援朝的若干视点探析 [Analysis of Deng Xiaoping's View on the Movement to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea], *Military Historical Research* 军事历史研究 1 (2001): 28-35.

valuable in that it studies the 1970s and 1980s, a time of political limbo when PRC-U.S. and PRC-ROK relations were both in flux.

These studies all offer detailed insights about the CCP's propaganda efforts, their key themes and messages, and underlying political objectives. Combined, they lay the foundation of further analysis of propaganda speeches, allowing for comparison between wartime propaganda and later propaganda efforts through commemoration. Their major limitation is, again, their timeframe—the analyses do not extend beyond the wartime years, leaving the propaganda value of the Korean War in its afterlife insufficiently researched.

iv) **Historical PRC-DPRK Relations**

The last body of literature studies the history of PRC-DPRK relations. Publications on this critical topic are surprisingly scarce, mostly due to the lack of reliable sources as North Korean archives remain inaccessible to foreign scholars. The most seminal research on the topic is Shen Zhihua and Xia Yafeng's *A Misunderstood Friendship: Mao Zedong, Kim Il-Sung, and Sino-North Korean Relations, 1949-1976*, a detailed analysis of PRC-DPRK relations from the foundation of the PRC in 1949 to the end of Mao's rule in 1976.²⁵ Shen and Xia argue that “the Sino-North Korean special relationship can be traced to 1958, when the Chinese People's Volunteer Army withdrew from North Korea.”²⁶ Shen and Xia divides the 27 years into six time periods, based on the ebbs and flows of high-level diplomacy between the PRC and DPRK: (i) 1950 to 1953, when the two countries experienced tensions due to the Korean War and their differing national interests; (ii) 1953 to 1956, when Kim's aspirations for more independence

²⁵ Shen Zhihua and Xia Yafeng, *A Misunderstood Friendship: Mao Zedong, Kim Il-Sung, and Sino-North Korean Relations, 1949-1976* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018).

²⁶ Ibid., 4.

clashed with Mao's intention to keep North Korea as a vassal and protectorate; (iii) 1957 to 1960, when Mao, to bolster China's rising international recognition in the Socialist bloc, tried to draw Kim closer and started the so-called "special relationship"; (iv) 1961 to 1965, when Kim balanced his relations with the USSR and PRC during the Sino-Soviet split to extract aid, while China was willing to strengthen PRC-DPRK ties to solidify its own leadership in the Socialist bloc; (v) 1965 to 1969, when PRC-DPRK ties cooled during the Cultural Revolution and China's self-imposed isolation; and (vi) 1970 to 1976, when China initially attempted to revive its ties with DPRK to counter tensions with the USSR, but détente with the United States ended up rupturing the "special" PRC-DPRK ties.²⁷

Shen and Xia's work is a rarity. There are virtually no authoritative works on PRC-DPRK relations during the 1980s, due to lack of archival resources. The 1990s onwards, on the other hand, suffer from a lack of consensus, with varying political speculations and diplomatic debates on China's intentions toward North Korea amid international efforts to curb the latter's nuclear program and dictatorship. With no conclusive answer, the PRC's objectives toward DPRK remains a hotly debated topic.

While limited in its timeframe, the existing works nonetheless provide background knowledge critical for understanding PRC-DPRK relations and contextualizing any propaganda messages crafted during the periods covered. Speculations on what PRC-DPRK relations would have been during the 1980s and beyond, while not as authoritative in their assertions, would regardless provide a good background for interpreting and evaluating the messages in CCP speeches during these years.

²⁷ Ibid., 8-11.

Existing studies on the Korean War thus highlight the multiplicity of motivations behind the CCP's decision to intervene in the Korean War, including domestic goals of consolidating political control, and international goals of gaining global prestige and protecting national security from external threat. Research on Korean War commemoration suggests that the political propagandist value of the war continues into the modern day, and analyses of wartime propaganda strategies confirm that the CCP used the war as a political tool for domestic mobilization and consolidation.

With the significance, in turn, comes a need. The outsized emphasis on the war and its immediate aftermath results in gaps in research on the decades that follow. Museums and textbooks, the main sources in extant scholarship, are imperfect case studies due to their lagging responsiveness and narrow audience, respectively. Research on PRC-DPRK relations is fragmented and incomplete, which all the more emphasizes a need for further research on the matter. With this need in mind, this paper explores a new source—CCP commemoration speeches on the Korean War—to better understand the propagandist value that the war holds for the party and the contemporary domestic and international goals that the party aimed at achieving through propaganda. With the relative consistency in which Korean War commemoration events had been held for the past 60 years, this paper complements the fragmented timelines of existing research and offers new insights by tapping into a medium which has not been extensively researched.

III. CCP Commemoration Speeches, 1950 - 2010

A close analysis of CCP commemoration speeches suggests that the Korean War narrative was indeed a multifaceted, malleable propaganda tool for the CCP to bolster domestic and international objectives. Since its inception, the Korean War narrative served as a domestic propaganda tool for rallying domestic support for the CCP, although the specific projects the party tried supporting through the war changed over time. Internationally, the war narrative had served as a means of signaling CCP support of the PRC's diplomatic partners, initially focusing on the DPRK and later accommodating new partners such as the United States, ROK, and Russia.

i) 1950 - 1953: War Period

The years 1950 to 1953 set the initial discourse of the Korean War, including the basic terminology, the general structure of the narrative on the war's progress and China's interests, and the major takeaways from the war.

One key notion was that the United States was an “imperialist” power threatening other countries' sovereignty, including that of China. A June 1950 article by Mao Zedong in the *People's Daily* called for the people to unite and prepare for any U.S. provocations, labeling the United States as an “imperialist power” for its interference in the internal affairs of other countries.²⁸ In his speech on October 24, 1951, Peng Zhen, Vice Chairman of the Chinese People's Committee to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, further elaborated this sentiment

²⁸ Mao Zedong 毛泽东, “Tuanjie qilai dabai Meidiguo zhuyi de renhe tiaoxin” 团结起来打败美帝国主义的任何挑衅 [Unite and defeat any provocations from U.S. imperialism], in *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao* 建国以来毛泽东军事文稿 [The military manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the Founding of the Nation], 1st ed, vol. 1 (Beijing, China: Jun shi ke xue chu ban she, 2010), 154-5.

by calling the United States “invaders,” charging them of, among other misdeeds, crossing the 38th Parallel into North Korean territory, “occupying” Taiwan, and crossing into China’s airspace.²⁹

In contrast, China was framed as a peace-cherishing nation that only entered the war due to U.S. aggression. Mao, in his 1951 article, stated that “[w]e do not invade any nation; we only oppose imperialists’ invasions into our country.”³⁰ Peng’s speech similarly noted how the “U.S. imperialists” delayed negotiations and continued their “desperate advance,” leading to the need to continue the “Movement to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea.”³¹

While the United States was depicted as the invader, there was lack of emphasis on South Korea’s role in the war. Indeed, most commemoration speeches did not even mention South Korea; Mao’s article reflecting on the Korean War’s significance on September 12, 1953, mentioned the “U.S. imperialists” but did not censure other U.S. allies.³² When mentioned, these states were labeled as “accomplices” or “puppets,” portrayed as mere pawns of the United

²⁹ Peng Zhen 彭真, “Guanyu kang Mei yuan Chao baojia weiguo yundong de baogao — yijiuwuyi nian shiyue ershisiri zai Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi diyijie quanguo weiyuanhui disanci huiyi shang de baogao” 关于抗美援朝保家卫国运动的报告——一九五一年十月二十四日在中国人民政治协商会议第一届全国委员会第三次会议上的报告 [Report regarding the Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, Guard Home and Defend the Country Movement—Reported in the October 24, 1951 third meeting of the first National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 25, 1951, accessed August 15, 2019, <http://data.people.com.cn/rmrb/20191014/1?code=2>.

³⁰ Mao Zedong 毛泽东, “Zengjia shengchan lixing jieyue zhichi Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun” 增加生产厉行节约 支持中国人民志愿军 [Increase production, strictly enforce frugality, support the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army], October 23, 1951, in *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao* 建国以来毛泽东军事文稿 [The military manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the Founding of the Nation], 1st ed, vol. 1 (Beijing, China: Jun shi ke xue chu ban she, 2010), 555-556.

³¹ Peng Zhen 彭真, “Guanyu kang Mei yuan Chao baojia weiguo yundong de baogao — yijiuwuyi nian shiyue ershisiri zai Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi diyijie quanguo weiyuanhui disanci huiyi shang de baogao” 关于抗美援朝保家卫国运动的报告——一九五一年十月二十四日在中国人民政治协商会议第一届全国委员会第三次会议上的报告 [Report regarding the Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, Guard Home and Defend the Country Movement—Reported in the October 24, 1951 third meeting of the first National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 25, 1951, accessed August 15, 2019, <http://data.people.com.cn/rmrb/20191014/1?code=2>.

³² Mao Zedong 毛泽东, “Kangmei yuanchao de shengli he yiyi” 抗美援朝的胜利和意义 [The significance of the victory of the war to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea], September 12, 1953, in *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao* 建国以来毛泽东军事文稿 [The military manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the Founding of the Nation], 1st ed, vol. 2 (Beijing, China: Jun shi ke xue chu ban she, 2010), 173-176.

States.³³ The war, thus, was framed as one undertaken by the United States alone.

Another major concept established during this period was the CCP's dual justification of China's intervention on both realpolitik and ideological grounds to convince the domestic population to support the war and the CCP's leadership. Peng's 1951 speech, for instance, rationalized China's entering the war through two fronts: necessity to counter U.S. hostility toward China and the righteous cause of promoting peace against U.S. imperialist ambitions.³⁴ Quoting Mao to describe the "U.S. invasion" of not only DPRK but also Taiwan and China's airspace, Peng concluded that China must fight the war to protect the country from direct invasion. To Peng, the Korean War was also an ideological attack, as he equated the Chinese "success" with proof that the judgments of Mao and Stalin were correct—that is, the Chinese efforts to counter "unjust," invasive ambitions of U.S. imperialism were succeeding due to their "just," ideologically correct nature.³⁵ This ideological argument was reflected in the CCP's characterization of the United States, which was purportedly a "paper tiger" that was "strong on the outside, weak on the inside" since it lacked the political correctness that the PRC and USSR enjoyed.³⁶ Mao, in his 1953 article, similarly described the lesson of the war as follows: "by relying on the people, and a relatively correct leadership, we can use our inferior materiel to

³³ See, for instance, "Zai shoudu qingzhu zhiyuanjun chuguo zuozhan liangzhounian dahui shang kang Mei yuan Chao zonghui changwu weiyuan Zhang Xiruo de kaihuici" 在首都庆祝志愿军出国作战两周年大会上 抗美援朝总会常务委员张奚若的开会词 [Opening Speech by Zhang Xiruo, Standing Committee member of Chinese People's Committee to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, at the capital's second year anniversary convention to celebrate the Chinese People's Volunteer Arm's moving abroad to fight], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 26, 1952, accessed August 16, 2019.

³⁴ ³⁴ Peng Zhen 彭真, "Guanyu kang Mei yuan Chao baojia weiguo yundong de baogao — yijiuwuyi nian shiyue ershisiri zai Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi diyijie quanguo weiyuanhui disanci huiyi shang de baogao" 关于抗美援朝保家卫国运动的报告——一九五一年十月二十四日在中国人民政治协商会议第一届全国委员会第三次会议上的报告 [Report regarding the Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, Guard Home and Defend the Country Movement—Reported in the October 24, 1951 third meeting of the first National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 25, 1951, accessed August 15, 2019, <http://data.people.com.cn/rmrb/20191014/1?code=2>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

triumph over enemies with superior materiel.”³⁷ The political connection here was obvious: it was the CCP’s correct leadership and political will under Socialist ideology that led to China’s victory of the Korean War. With the United States described as inferior to China in terms of political correctness and (consequentially) actual military might, Communist China was portrayed as a victorious challenger of the United States.

Unlike with the United States, however, the CCP did not attempt to differentiate itself from its communist allies: the USSR and DPRK. All speeches from these years described the war as a joint victory with the North Korean military, even while emphasizing domestic accomplishments under the Movement to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea.³⁸ Peng’s 1951 speech lauded the role of the Soviet Union as the leader of the international Socialist bloc, stating that “during the struggle to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea, the Chinese people of all classes . . . recognized the peaceful, democratic countries and people worldwide who cherish

³⁷ Mao Zedong 毛泽东, “Kang Mei yuan Chao de shengli he yiyi” 抗美援朝的胜利和意义 [The significance of the victory of the war to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea], September 12, 1953, in *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao* 建国以来毛泽东军事文稿 [The military manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the Founding of the Nation], 1st ed, vol. 2 (Beijing, China: Jun shi ke xue chu ban she, 2010), 174-175.

³⁸ Peng, for instance, claims that “the People’s Volunteer Army, with the North Korean People’s Army, gained a grand victory” during the war; Zhang’s 1952 speech similarly credits the victory to both China and DPRK; and Mao’s 1953 article similarly emphasizes the feat of driving U.S. forces back to the 38th parallel as achieved with the DPRK army. ³⁸ Peng Zhen 彭真, “Guanyu kang Mei yuan Chao baojia weiguo yundong de baogao — — yijiuwuyi nian shiyue ershisiri zai Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi diyijie quanguo weiyuanhui disanci huiyi shang de baogao” 关于抗美援朝保家卫国运动的报告——一九五一年十月二十四日在中国人民政治协商会议第一届全国委员会第三次会议上的报告 [Report regarding the Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, Guard Home and Defend the Country Movement—Reported in the October 24, 1951 third meeting of the first National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 25, 1951, accessed August 15, 2019, [http://data.people.com.cn/rmrb/20191014/1?code=2](http://data.people.com.cn/rmrb/20191014/1?code=2;); “Zai shoudu qingzhu zhiyuanjun chuguo zuozhan liangzhounian dahui shang kang Mei yuan Chao zonghui changwu weiyuan Zhang Xiruo de kaihuici” 在首都庆祝志愿军出国作战两周年大会上 抗美援朝总会常务委员张奚若的开会词 [Opening Speech by Zhang Xiruo, Standing Committee member of Chinese People’s Committee to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, at the capital’s second year anniversary convention to celebrate the Chinese People’s Volunteer Arm’s moving abroad to fight], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 26, 1952, accessed August 16, 2019; Mao Zedong 毛泽东, “Kang Mei yuan Chao de shengli he yiyi” 抗美援朝的胜利和意义 [The significance of the victory of the war to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea], September 12, 1953, in *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao* 建国以来毛泽东军事文稿 [The military manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the Founding of the Nation], 1st ed, vol. 2 (Beijing, China: Jun shi ke xue chu ban she 军事科学出版社, 2010), 175.

peace, led by the Soviet Union.”³⁹

Overall, these speeches established the basis of the subsequent Korean War rhetoric. The antagonistic positioning of the United States vis-a-vis China, emphasis on U.S. “aggression” and China’s “forced” entry into war as a peace-loving nation, and calls to unite under the righteous CCP leadership, were all seen in later speeches.

What differentiated the wartime years, however, was the CCP’s mainly domestic focus in its Korean War narrative. The realpolitik argument of China being under U.S. siege was consistently invoked, arguing that mainland China was protected by fighting the Korean War, as suggested in the full name of the movement: Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, Protect the Home and the Nation. Other countries such as the USSR and DPRK were merely acknowledged as partner nations, suggesting that the Korean War narrative bore more value for domestic rallying through an invocation of an enemy (the United States) than in international positioning of the PRC. Indeed, even the ideological argument of fighting under the righteous cause of Socialism that positioned China in the communist bloc tied back to the CCP’s political legitimacy and domestic war mobilization efforts. Peng’s speech is an explicit example, calling for “eliminating imperialist spies hidden in all corners of China,” and establishing a so-called “home front.”⁴⁰ The domestic emphasis reflected the issues the CCP faced in continuing the war: general war fatigue after the Chinese Civil War and the CCP’s still-shaky control over mainland China. The Korean War narrative was thus crafted as a propagandist tool to serve the CCP’s

³⁹ ³⁹ Peng Zhen 彭真, “Guanyu kang Mei yuan Chao baojia weiguo yundong de baogao — yijiuwuyi nian shiyue ershisiri zai Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi diyijie quanguo weiyuanhui disanci huiyi shang de baogao” 关于抗美援朝保家卫国运动的报告——一九五一年十月二十四日在中国人民政治协商会议第一届全国委员会第三次会议上的报告 [Report regarding the Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, Guard Home and Defend the Country Movement—Reported in the October 24, 1951 third meeting of the first National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 25, 1951, accessed August 15, 2019, <http://data.people.com.cn/rmrb/20191014/1?code=2>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

political purposes since its inception; it was, however, mainly focused on domestic needs in its earlier years.

ii) 1954 - 1956: Post-War

In the years immediately following the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement in 1953, there were no reports of domestic, centrally-organized commemoration events offered by the CCP. Against the backdrop of contemporary political challenges, the lack of commemoration during these years further confirmed the Korean War narrative's domestic propaganda value, while suggesting for the first time its usage for international signaling.

The decrease in domestic commemoration since 1953 confirmed that the CCP's initial main purpose of celebrating the war was for domestic wartime mobilization. The events closest to central commemoration were those organized by the PVA leadership in Pyongyang in 1954 and 1955. News coverage of PVA leaders' speeches, while very short and mainly reiterating earlier speeches' content, newly emphasized the need for the military—and not the Chinese people as a whole, unlike previous speeches—to remain “vigilant” and continue fighting until the final victory.⁴¹ This change most likely reflected the reduced necessity to garner war support after the signing of the armistice, which, in turn, decreased the need to commemorate the war. The only people who needed to stay mobilized were military personnel, not the Chinese public.

The additional decrease in commemoration fervor in 1956, meanwhile, most likely reflected the cooling of PRC-DPRK relations that year, suggesting the first use of the Korean

⁴¹ “Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun lingdao jiguan juxing dahui jinian kang Mei yuan Chao sizhounian” 中国人民志愿军领导机关举行大会纪念抗美援朝四周年 [Chinese People's Volunteer Army leadership organize convention to commemorate fourth anniversary of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 27, 1954, accessed August 16, 2019; “Zhiyuanjun lingdao jiguan juxing shengda jihui” 志愿军领导机关举行盛大集会 [Chinese People's Volunteer Army Leadership hold grand assembly], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 26, 1955, accessed February 28, 2020.

War as an international signaling tool. In 1956, there was no central event hosted in Pyongyang, with individual troops celebrating the anniversary on their own.⁴² There was one hosted by the DPRK Ambassador to China, but the *PLA Daily* coverage of the speech delivered by the Chinese representative, General Gan Siqi, was merely three lines, reiterating China's call for vigilance amid U.S. and ROK threats of "northern invasion."⁴³ This cooling of celebration fervor was most likely due to Kim Il-sung's purge of domestic political factions, which left the Chinese leadership dissatisfied. Discord worsened in 1956 after failed attempts to weaken Kim's political power by the "Yan'an faction," a political faction within the DPRK with ties to Beijing which inspired Kim's massive political purge in August.⁴⁴ The lack of commemoration events in 1956 in the usual month of October suggested that the Korean War narrative was actively used by the CCP to convey an international message for the first time: discontent toward the DPRK.

iii) 1957 - 1958: Improving PRC-DPRK Ties

The PRC's Korean War commemoration in 1957 and 1958, in turn, reflected the improvement of PRC-DPRK ties, portraying the DPRK as a respectable partner of the PRC. Continuation of touting the CCP's decision to enter the war as "correct," meanwhile, suggested the CCP's continued use of the narrative for domestic propaganda.

In 1957, Mao desired to improve PRC-DPRK ties against the backdrop of the rising international status of the PRC. As Shen and Xia describe, Mao believed that "he was much more

⁴² See, for instance, "Zhiyuanjun jinian kang Mei yuan Chao liuzhounian" 志愿军纪念抗美援朝六周年 [People's Volunteer Army commemorates sixth anniversary of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and aid Korea], *PLA Daily*, October 27, 1956, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/13881798>.

⁴³ "Chaoxian zhuhua dashiguan juxing weiwen wanhui" 朝鲜驻华大使馆举行慰问晚会 [Democratic People's Republic of Korea Embassy hold memorial service evening party], *PLA Daily*, October 27, 1956, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/13881794>.

⁴⁴ Shen and Xia, *A Misunderstood Friendship*, 97.

sophisticated theoretically than Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and that therefore the CCP was quite qualified to be a coleader [*sic*] of the socialist camp”; thus, it “became necessary that China exhibit some magnanimity toward the DPRK.”⁴⁵ This approach led to improved bilateral communication between the PRC and DPRK during the latter half of 1957. Mao later withdrew all PVA forces from the DPRK to accommodate Kim’s desire to unify Korea independently, further strengthening their relations.⁴⁶

The CCP ramped up its celebration of the Korean War accordingly. In 1957 October, the PVA leadership reinstated its commemoration event in Pyongyang.⁴⁷ Especially important was Commander Yang Yong’s 1958 October report of the PVA’s work to the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress and the Standing Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.⁴⁸

In his speech, Yang extensively highlighted the DPRK’s contribution in the war and actively positioned China as a respectful partner, unlike previous speeches that focused mainly on the domestic implications of the war. Stating that the war “further strengthened . . . the traditional friendship between the people of China and North Korea,” Yang equated “the North Korean people’s suffering” to “the suffering of our own and all of mankind.”⁴⁹ Yang argued that “the Korean problem [was] one that the Korean people should resolve themselves with no foreign interference,” and that the PVA’s withdrawal was a demonstration of China’s respect of

⁴⁵ Ibid., 111.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 113.

⁴⁷ “Zhiyuanjun longzhong juxing jinian dahui” 志愿军隆重举行纪念大会 [People’s Volunteer Army holds grand commemoration ceremony], *PLA Daily*, October 26, 1957, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/13887899>.

⁴⁸ Yang Yong 杨勇, “Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun banian lai kang Mei yuan Chao gongzuo baogao” 中国人民志愿军八年来抗美援朝工作报告 [Chinese People’s Volunteer Army’s work report for the past eight years to resist U.S. Aggression and aid Korea], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 31, 1958, accessed August 16, 2019.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

DPRK sovereignty.⁵⁰ Yang even claimed that the North Korean people's "brave struggle and sublime patriotism and internationalism educated [the PVA] extremely profoundly."⁵¹ Yang conveyed a more equal relationship between the DPRK and PRC, emphasizing the DPRK's wartime contributions and Socialist standing much more extensively than previous speeches.

Yang further demonstrated respect toward the DPRK by adopting the DPRK's war narrative into his, delivering the first public speech to state that the Korean War began as an invasion from the south orchestrated by the United States. Yang claimed that "the American imperialists abetted their follower, the Rhee Syngman clique, and began the long-schemed attack on the [DPRK]," deviating from previous CCP narratives that blamed the United States only for "meddling with other countries' internal affairs" and "intruding into North Korean territory" after the war began, but never for starting the war itself.⁵² The new narrative came from the DPRK, which had long argued that the war began from a southern invasion. That China openly adopted this narrative into its own suggested that the CCP put increased value on PRC-DPRK relations.

Nevertheless, domestic propaganda messages remained strong. Yang argued that the Korean War proved that "if peace-cherishing people across the world want[ed] to gain peace, they need[ed] to take proactive actions to resist violence and stop invasion."⁵³ This reaffirmed the correctness of the CCP's decision to enter the war; in Yang's words, "the victory of the Korean War [was] the victory of the CCP's and Chairman Mao's wise decision, and the victory of Chairman Mao Thought."⁵⁴ While Yang still characterized the Socialist bloc as led by the USSR, Yang additionally stated that PRC-DPRK relations will "strengthen the power of the

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Socialist bloc under the leadership of the Soviet Union.”⁵⁵ By extolling China’s contributions to the international Socialist bloc, the speech not only reflected China’s growing ambition to exert more global leadership, but also its growing need for domestic legitimacy in the aftermath of the Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1957 and its promotion of the Great Leap Forward starting in 1958.

The period 1957 to 1958 evinced an improvement of PRC-DPRK relations after its relative cooling during the preceding years. If the year 1958 was the beginning of a “special relation” as claimed by Shen and Xia, the speeches indeed suggested an effort to strengthen bilateral ties. The international signaling value of the Korean War increased here, with active positioning of China vis-a-vis not just the United States but also North Korea. The war’s domestic propaganda value, while less prominent than in preceding years, still remained, as can be seen in the emphasis of the CCP and Mao’s “wise decision” throughout the speech.

iv) 1960 - Early 1966: Pivot to DPRK

Speeches from 1960 to 1966 demonstrated the CCP’s attempt to further solidify PRC-DPRK relations, with the Korean War narrative focusing more on international signaling than domestic propaganda. However, domestic rallying remained a key factor in the narrative as the CCP emphasized the continuing need to struggle against the United States.

The 1960s witnessed growing PRC-USSR rivalry, as each strived to garner support from other countries in the Socialist bloc—including the DPRK—to establish itself as the leader of the Socialist bloc and the International Communist Movement.⁵⁶ Reflecting the CCP’s desire to win

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Shen and Xia, *A Misunderstood Friendship*, 137.

DPRK support, Chinese leadership brought the spotlight of the Korean War to the DPRK by dramatically shifting its main national commemoration date from October 25, when China entered the war, to June 25, when the war began. Actively adopting the DPRK's war narrative by calling the war the "Great Fatherland Liberation War," these June events were hosted annually except for the year 1962, while China's entry into the Korean War was celebrated only on 1960 and 1965.

Speeches during the June events indicated the CCP's desire to give the DPRK more credit and portray the two countries' bond as advancing the benefit of the Socialist bloc in terms of security and ideological development. In all events, CCP leaders argued that the U.S. imperialists started the invasive war against North Korea, touting the "heroic North Korean people" and their victorious struggle against the invaders and expressing continued Chinese support of the DPRK's

struggle against U.S. threat.⁵⁷ Except for the 1960 June, 1960 October, and 1965 October celebrations, which characterized the victory of the war as jointly earned, all subsequent speeches characterized the war as a unilateral victory of the DPRK, with Chinese participation only briefly mentioned.⁵⁸ Not only getting credit for winning the war, the DPRK also got credit

⁵⁷ See, for instance, “Jinian Chaoxian renmin fandui Meiguo qinlüe de zuguo jiefang zhanzheng shizhounian Shoudu wanren jihui zhichi Chaoxian fandui Meiguo qinlüe” 纪念朝鲜人民反对美国侵略的祖国解放战争十周年 首都万人集会支持朝鲜反对美国侵略 [Commemorating the tenth anniversary of the North Korean people’s Great Fatherland Liberation War resisting U.S. invasion Rally of the ten thousand people of the capital support North Korea’s opposition of U.S. invasion], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1960, accessed February 22, 2020; “Shoudu shenghui jinian Chaoxian zuguo jiefang zhanzheng shier zhounian” 首都盛会纪念朝鲜祖国解放战争十二周年 [Capital event commemorate twelfth anniversary of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s Great Fatherland Liberation War], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1962, accessed February 22, 2020; “Zhongguo renmin jianjue zhichi Chaoxian renmin fandui Meidiguo zhuyi jixu qinzhan Nanchaoxian, zhengqu zuguo heping tongyi de douzheng shoudu longzhong jihui jinian Chaoxian zuguo jiefang zhanzheng shisan zhounian” 中国人民坚决支持朝鲜人民反对美帝国主义继续侵占南朝鲜、争取祖国和平统一的斗争首都隆重集会纪念朝鲜祖国解放战争十三周年 [Capital’s grand rally of the Chinese people firmly supporting the North Korean people oppose U.S. imperialism’s continued invasion and occupation of South Korea, and the struggle for motherland’s peaceful unification commemorate thirteenth anniversary of North Korea’s Great Fatherland Liberation War], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1963, accessed February 22, 2020; “Zai shou du gejie renmin fandui Meijun jixu qinzhan Nanchaoxian dahui shang Liao Chengzhi tongzhi de jianghua” 在首都各界人民反对美军继续侵占南朝鲜大会上 廖承志通知的讲话 [Comrade Liao Chengzhi’s speech at the convention of people from all walks of life from the capital resisting the U.S. military’s continued invasion and occupation of South Korea], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1963, accessed February 22, 2020; “Shoudu longzhong jihui jinian Chaoxian renmin zuguo jiefang zhanzheng shisi zhounian jianjue zhichi Chaoxian renmin fan Mei aiguo douzheng” 首都隆重集会纪念朝鲜人民祖国解放战争十四周年坚决支持朝鲜人民反美爱国斗争 [Capital’s grand rally commemorate the fourteenth anniversary of the North Korean people’s Great Fatherland Liberation War and firmly support North Koreans in their patriotic struggle against the United States], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1964, accessed October 12, 2019; “Zaishou du gejie renmin zhichi Chaoxian renmin yaoqiu Meiguo qinlüejun chechu Nanchaoxian he tongyi zuguo douzheng dahui shang Mao Dun fuzhuxi de jianghua” 在首都各界人民支持朝鲜人民要求美国侵略军撤出南朝鲜和统一祖国斗争大会上 茅盾副主席的讲话 [Vice Chairman Mao Dun’s speech at the convention of people of all walks of life of the capital supporting North Korean people’s demand of the U.S. invaders to withdraw troops from South Korea and struggle for unification of motherland], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1964, accessed April 5, 2020; “Zai shoudu gejie renmin jinian ‘liu · erwu’ shiwu zhounian zhichi Chaoxian renmin fan Mei douzheng yue dahui shang Liu Ningyi fuweiyuanzhang de jianghua” 在首都各界人民纪念“六·二五”十五周年支持朝鲜人民反美斗争月大会上刘宁一副委员长的讲话 [Vice Committee Chair Liu Ningyi’s speech at the convention of people of all walks of life of the capital commemorating the fifteenth anniversary of ‘6.25’ and month of supporting North Korean people’s anti-U.S. struggle], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1965, accessed April 5, 2020; and “Shoudu jihui jinian Chaoxian jiefang zhanzheng shiliu zhounian Chen Yi fuzongli he Lin Feng, Liu Ningyi fuweiyuanzhang deng lingdaoren chuxi le dahui” 首都集会纪念朝鲜解放战争十六周年陈毅副总理和林枫、刘宁一副委员长等领导人出席了大会 [Capital rally commemorate sixteenth anniversary of North Korea’s Great Fatherland Liberation War; Leaders such as Vice Premier Chen Yi, Vice Chairmen Lin Feng and Liu Ningyi attend conference], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1966, accessed February 22, 2020.

⁵⁸ See, for instance, “Jinian Chaoxian renmin fandui Meiguo qinlüe de zuguo jiefang zhanzheng shizhounian Shoudu wanren jihui zhichi Chaoxian fandui Meiguo qinlüe” 纪念朝鲜人民反对美国侵略的祖国解放战争十周年 首都万人集会支持朝鲜反对美国侵略 [Commemorating the tenth anniversary of the North Korean people’s Great Fatherland Liberation War resisting U.S. invasion Rally of the ten thousand people of the capital support North Korea’s opposition of U.S. invasion], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1960, accessed February 22, 2020. For the October celebrations, please refer to “Zhong Chao renmin dabai le gongtong diren——Meidiguo zhuyi Pumie le qinlüe zhanhuo, zhengjiu le yazhou he shijie heping” 中朝人民打败了共同敌人——美帝国主义 扑灭了侵略战火，拯救了亚洲和世界和平 [The people of China and North Korea defeated common enemy—U.S. imperialism, extinguished the flames of war of the invasion, saved Asia and world peace] *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 26, 1960, accessed August 16, 2019; “Shoudu longzhong jihui jinian zhiyuanjun fu Chao zuozhan shiwu zhounian” 首都隆重集会纪念志愿军赴朝作战十五周年 [Capital host grand rally commemorating the fifteenth anniversary of the People’s Volunteer Army’s going to Korea and fighting], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 26, 1965, accessed October 12, 2019.

for protecting China's safety; as Guo Moruo stated in 1960, "through their heroic fight, the North Korean people not only defended their sacred territory, but also defended the entire Socialist bloc, and directly used their flesh and blood to support [China]." ⁵⁹ These speeches interpreted the Korean War as mainly undertaken by the DPRK, with the Chinese people having unilaterally benefitted from the DPRK's fight and accordingly owing gratitude and recognition to the DPRK.

Meanwhile, the lack of recognition and later criticism of the USSR reflected the ongoing Sino-Soviet split and the CCP's denouncement of the USSR as revisionist. ⁶⁰ Only the 1960 speeches mentioned the USSR as the leader of the Socialist bloc; subsequent speeches did not mention the USSR at all, and the 1966 speech by Foreign Minister Chen Yi directly criticized the USSR as "revisionists." ⁶¹ Hailing what Chen characterized in his 1962 speech as the "proletarian internationalist friendship between the people of China and North Korea that was sealed with blood," the CCP attempted to portray China (and DPRK) as more ideologically proper than the USSR, implying its legitimacy as the international leader of the Socialist bloc.

Despite these international messages, the speeches maintained their domestic propagandistic value. All speeches consistently emphasized the U.S. "occupation" of Taiwan and invasion of Chinese territorial sovereignty, and speeches in 1960 and 1962 also argued that U.S. imperialists' "invasive" or "bandit-like" nature "cannot be changed," calling for fighting against

⁵⁹ "Jinian Chaoxian renmin fandui Meiguo qinlüe de zuguo jiefang zhanzheng shizhounian Shoudu wanren jihui zhichi Chaoxian fandui Meiguo qinlüe" 纪念朝鲜人民反对美国侵略的祖国解放战争十周年 首都万人集会支持朝鲜反对美国侵略 [Commemorating the tenth anniversary of the North Korean people's Great Fatherland Liberation War resisting U.S. invasion Rally of the ten thousand people of the capital support North Korea's opposition of U.S. invasion], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1960, accessed February 22, 2020.

⁶⁰ See, for instance, "Excerpts From Chinese Communists' Attack on Policies of Soviet Party Leadership," *New York Times*, February 7, 1964, accessed March 17, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/02/07/archives/excerpts-from-chinese-communists-attack-on-policies-of-soviet-party.html>.

⁶¹ "Shoudu jihui jinian Chaoxian jiefang zhanzheng shiliu zhounian Chen Yi fuzongli he Lin Feng, Liu Ningyi fuweiyuanzhang deng lingdaoren chuxi le dahui" 首都集会纪念朝鲜解放战争十六周年陈毅副总理和林枫、刘宁一副委员长等领导人出席了大会 [Capital rally commemorate sixteenth anniversary of North Korea's Great Fatherland Liberation War; Leaders such as Vice Premier Chen Yi, Vice Chairmen Lin Feng and Liu Ningyi attend conference], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1966, accessed February 22, 2020.

the United States to continue instead of attempting to negotiate.⁶² This sentiment culminated in 1966 when Chen called for the nation to push for the Cultural Revolution and unite under Mao Zedong Thought to “carry through to the end the struggle to resist imperialism, resist revisionism, [and] resist reactionaries in each country.”⁶³ Even when the Korean War narrative pivoted toward international signaling, the CCP kept using the Korean War for domestic objectives nonetheless.

v) Later 1966 - 1969: Cultural Revolution

Between the latter half of 1966 and 1969, no reports of CCP-hosted commemoration events of the Korean War were found. The only exception was a brief 1968 *People's Daily* article that reported on the local sacrifice offering ceremony held at the Martyrs Cemetery of the

⁶² “Jinian Chaoxian renmin fandui Meiguo qinlüe de zuguo jiefang zhanzheng shizhounian Shoudu wanren jihui zhichi Chaoxian fandui Meiguo qinlüe” 纪念朝鲜人民反对美国侵略的祖国解放战争十周年 首都万人集会支持朝鲜反对美国侵略 [Commemorating the tenth anniversary of the North Korean people's Great Fatherland Liberation War resisting U.S. invasion Rally of the ten thousand people of the capital support North Korea's opposition of U.S. invasion], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1960, accessed February 22, 2020; “Shoudu shenghui jinian Chaoxian zuguo jiefang zhanzheng shier zhounian” 首都盛会纪念朝鲜祖国解放战争十二周年 [Capital event commemorate twelfth anniversary of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Great Fatherland Liberation War], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1962, accessed February 22, 2020; “Zai shou du gejie renmin fandui Meijun jixu qinzhan Nanchaoxian dahui shang Liao Chengzhi tongzhi de jianghua” 在首都各界人民反对美军继续侵占南朝鲜大会上 廖承志通知的讲话 [Comrade Liao Chengzhi's speech at the convention of people from all walks of life from the capital resisting the U.S. military's continued invasion and occupation of South Korea], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1963, accessed February 22, 2020; “Zaishoudu gejie renmin zhichi Chaoxian renmin yaoqiu Meiguo qinlüejun chechu Nanchaoxian he tongyi zuguo douzheng dahui shang Mao Dun fuzhuxi de jianghua” 在首都各界人民支持朝鲜人民要求美国侵略军撤出南朝鲜和统一祖国斗争大会上 茅盾副主席的讲话 [Vice Chairman Mao Dun's speech at the convention of people of all walks of life of the capital supporting North Korean people's demand of the U.S. invaders to withdraw troops from South Korea and struggle for unification of motherland], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1964, accessed April 5, 2020; “Zai shoudu gejie renmin jinian ‘liu · erwu’ shiwu zhounian zhichi Chaoxian renmin fan Mei douzheng yue dahui shang Liu Ningyi fuweiyuanzhang de jianghua” 在首都各界人民纪念“六·二五”十五周年支持朝鲜人民反美斗争月大会上 刘宁一副委员长的讲话 [Vice Committee Chair Liu Ningyi's speech at the convention of people of all walks of life of the capital commemorating the fifteenth anniversary of ‘6.25’ and month of supporting North Korean people's anti-U.S. struggle], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1965, accessed April 5, 2020; “Shoudu jihui jinian Chaoxian jiefang zhanzheng shiliu zhounian Chen Yi fuzongli he Lin Feng, Liu Ningyi fuweiyuanzhang deng lingdaoren chuxi le dahui” 首都集会纪念朝鲜解放战争十六周年 陈毅副总理和林枫、刘宁一副委员长等领导人出席了大会 [Capital rally commemorate sixteenth anniversary of North Korea's Great Fatherland Liberation War; Leaders such as Vice Premier Chen Yi, Vice Chairmen Lin Feng and Liu Ningyi attend conference], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1966, accessed February 22, 2020.

⁶³ “Shoudu jihui jinian Chaoxian jiefang zhanzheng shiliu zhounian Chen Yi fuzongli he Lin Feng, Liu Ningyi fuweiyuanzhang deng lingdaoren chuxi le dahui” 首都集会纪念朝鲜解放战争十六周年 陈毅副总理和林枫、刘宁一副委员长等领导人出席了大会 [Capital rally commemorate sixteenth anniversary of North Korea's Great Fatherland Liberation War; Leaders such as Vice Premier Chen Yi, Vice Chairmen Lin Feng and Liu Ningyi attend conference], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1966, accessed February 22, 2020.

Chinese People's Volunteers at Shenyang and Dandong.⁶⁴ Even here, however, the report made no political commentary except for a brief paragraph hailing the martyrs' extraordinary "revolutionary spirit" and calling for the Chinese people to "carry through to the end the proletarian Cultural Revolution and . . . the revolutionary struggle against imperialism, revisionism, and reactionaries."⁶⁵

The fact that the Korean War was not used more often for domestic propaganda has a number of potential explanations. Some believe that this was due to the denouncement of Peng Dehuai, Leading Marshal of the PVA during the Korean War; invoking a war effort led by a denounced marshal may have been too risky during the Cultural Revolution.⁶⁶ Another explanation is that PRC-DPRK relations during the Cultural Revolution were lukewarm at best. Shen and Xia argue that bilateral relations during this period deteriorated due to China's "radical and uncompromising foreign and domestic policies."⁶⁷ Ma Jisen, in her study of the Chinese Foreign Ministry during the Cultural Revolution, also mentions that the Chinese fervor to disseminate Mao Zedong Thought through overseas missions estranged North Korea, and efforts to improve bilateral ties came only in 1970 when Chinese ambassadors, recalled during the Cultural Revolution, were sent back to DPRK.⁶⁸ Considering that the Korean War was invoked just before the Cultural Revolution as a key connection between the two countries, the

⁶⁴ "Jinian Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun kang Mei yuan Chao chuguo zuozhan shiba zhounian Shenyang Dandong deng geming qunzhong jisao zhiyuanjun lieshimu" 纪念中国人民志愿军抗美援朝出国作战十八周年 沈阳丹东等地革命群众祭扫志愿军烈士墓 [Shenyang, Dandong and other regions' revolutionary masses hold sacrifice sweeps at the Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea Martyrs' Cemetery to celebrate the eighteenth anniversary of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army's going abroad to fight], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 26, 1968, accessed August 16, 2019.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Jung Keun-Sik, for instance, argues that the experience of the Korean War "did not sufficiently function as a device of political propaganda due to the downfall of Peng Dehuai, the chief commander of the war, during the Cultural Revolution." Jung Keun-Sik, "China's Memory and Commemoration of the Korean War in the Memorial Hall of the 'War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea,'" *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, no. 14 (March 2015), 69.

⁶⁷ Shen and Xia, *A Misunderstood Friendship*, 173.

⁶⁸ Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2004), 155-56, 320, and 406.

subsequent cooling of relations might have sufficed for the CCP to stop invoking the war. Either way, the Korean War, previously actively celebrated for propaganda purposes, suffered low commemoration during the late 1960s precisely due to its political value. That the war was not invoked during politically sensitive times all the more highlighted the war narrative's usage as political propaganda.

vi) 1970 - 1971: Reviving PRC-DPRK Ties

The CCP broke its long hiatus and held two Korean War commemoration events in 1970, the first celebrating the 20th anniversary of the “Great Fatherland Liberation War” on June 25, and the second commemorating the 20th anniversary of China's entry into the war on October 25.⁶⁹ An additional anniversary celebration of June 25 was held on 1971.⁷⁰ The adjusted narrative again demonstrated the CCP's use of the Korean War for international signaling, calling for closer ties with the DPRK amid rising tensions with the USSR.

CCP leadership speeches from all three events delivered the same narrative as the early 1960s speeches. For instance, the 1970 June speech, delivered by State Council Deputy Prime

⁶⁹ “Zai shoudu renmin jinian Chaoxian zuguo jiefang zhanzheng ershi zhounian he shengtao Mei diguo zhuyi bazhan woguo Taiwan dahui shang Li Xiannian tongzhi de jianghua” 在首都人民纪念朝鲜祖国解放战争二十周年和声讨美帝国主义霸占我国台湾大会上 李先念同志的讲话 [Comrade Li Xiannian's speech at the capital's people's convention for the twentieth anniversary of North Korea's Great Fatherland Liberation War and condemning the U.S. imperialists' forcible occupation of our country's Taiwan], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1970, accessed April 5, 2020; “Shoudu wanren shenghui jinian Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun fu Chao canzhan ershi zhounian” 首都万人盛会纪念中国人民志愿军赴朝参战二十周年 [Capital event commemorate twentieth anniversary of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army's going to North Korea and entering the war], *PLA Daily*, October 25, 1970, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/14028671>; “Huang Yongsheng zong canmouzhang de jianghua” 黄永胜总参谋长的讲话 [Speech by Chief of Staff Huang Yongsheng], *PLA Daily*, October 25, 1970, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/14028675>.

⁷⁰ “Shoudu renmin zhuguan yanhui jinian Chaoxian zuguo jiefang zhanzheng ershiyi zhounian fennu shengtao Mei di qinlue Chaoxian, bazhan woguo lingtu Taiwan de taotian zuixing” 首都人民庄严集会纪念朝鲜祖国解放战争二十一年 愤怒声讨美帝侵略朝鲜、霸占我国领土台湾滔天罪行 [People of the capital solemnly assemble and commemorate twenty-first anniversary of North Korea's Great Fatherland Liberation War and furiously denounce the heinous crime of the U.S. imperialists invading North Korea and forcefully occupying our territory Taiwan], *PLA Daily*, June 26, 1971, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/14036717>; “Guo Moruo tongzhi de jianghua” 郭沫若同志的讲话 [Comrade Guo Moruo's speech], *PLA Daily*, June 26, 1971, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/14036728>.

Minister Li Xiannian, stated that the U.S. imperialists started the war against the DPRK as a step to invade China.⁷¹ Claiming the war as the DPRK's victory, Li stated that North Korea successfully thwarted the United States' "outrageous scheme to take over Asia and seek hegemony of the world."⁷² Li also characterized PRC-DPRK relations as a "solid militant friendship forged by fresh blood," continuing the early 1960s trend of praising the bilateral relationship.⁷³ Li called the United States the "most ferocious enemy of the people across the world," but stated that the people must not fear it and fight against "U.S. imperialists," again mobilizing the domestic population by invoking a need to fight against a threatening enemy.⁷⁴

Li's Korean War narrative did, however, have a notable development—Japan was included in the list of enemies. In his criticism against the United States, Li stated that it "already revived Japanese militarism," that "the Japanese reactionaries [were] trying to go down the same road of Tojo Hideki," and that "the U.S. imperialists [were] using Japanese reactionaries as the daring vanguard of its invasion into Asia."⁷⁵ Lumping the United States and Japan together as the PRC and DPRK's enemy, Li announced that "if the U.S. and Japanese reactionaries dare impose[d] another invasive war upon the people of China and North Korea, the Chinese people . . . will unite with the North Korean people as before, fight shoulder to shoulder, and thoroughly defeat the invaders."⁷⁶

Villainizing Japan reflected the newfound foreign policy needs of the CCP. The post-

⁷¹ "Zai shoudou renmin jinian Chaoxian zuguo jiefang zhanzheng ershi zhounian he shengtao Mei diguo zhuyi bazhan woguo Taiwan dahui shang Li Xiannian tongzhi de jianghua" 在首都人民纪念朝鲜祖国解放战争二十周年和声讨美帝国主义霸占我国台湾大会上 李先念同志的讲话 [Comrade Li Xiannian's speech at the capital's people's convention for the twentieth anniversary of North Korea's Great Fatherland Liberation War and condemning the U.S. imperialists' forcible occupation of our country's Taiwan], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, June 26, 1970, accessed April 5, 2020.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Cultural Revolution return of PRC diplomats to DPRK and mutual hostility toward Japan in 1970 allowed for improved PRC-DPRK relations.⁷⁷ The March 1969 PRC-USSR border conflict over the Zhenbao/Damansky Island and concerns over the possibility of a major military confrontation with the USSR also prompted the CCP to lure the DPRK away from Moscow and closer to Beijing.⁷⁸ These factors created a favorable environment for PRC-DPRK rapprochement; as Shen and Xia contend, “China . . . mended fences with North Korea before the process of rapprochement with the United States entered into full swing.”⁷⁹ The speeches’ addition of Japan in the list of enemies could have easily been a reflection of joint wariness of Japan’s rise in Asia as well as the rekindled camaraderie between the PRC and DPRK.

vii) 1972 - 1978: U.S.-PRC Rapprochement

This PRC-DPRK camaraderie, however, was damaged as the CCP sought another avenue of balancing USSR threats—the United States. With the famous “Ping-Pong diplomacy” in April 1971, PRC-U.S. relations improved rapidly, with U.S. National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger’s visit in July 1971, U.S. President Richard Nixon’s visit in 1972, and normalization of relations in 1979.⁸⁰

As if reflecting these developments, there were no reports of CCP-hosted Korean War commemoration events during these years. The only report was a *People’s Daily* article on a regional tomb-sweeping occasion in Liaoning Province to commemorate the 25th anniversary of China’s entry to the Korean War, but the article merely covered facts about the event (i.e. tomb-

⁷⁷ Shen and Xia, *A Misunderstood Friendship*, 192-193.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 197-199.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 200.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

sweeping and wreath presentations) with no political interpretation of the event attached.⁸¹

Amid ongoing engagement with the United States, invoking “U.S. imperialism” and its “invasive schemes” may have simply not been palatable. The DPRK’s unilateral actions that escalated tensions in the Korean Peninsula since 1974 may have furthered the CCP’s desire to distance itself from the DPRK.⁸² Shen and Xia argue that “China’s primary foreign policy goal [from 1970 to 1976] was to maintain détente with Washington . . . to form a united front to counter the Soviet threat and to prevent a resumption of war on the Korean Peninsula.”⁸³ If so, messages that the Chinese people would “unite with the North Korean people” to “struggle against a common enemy” and “support North Korea’s efforts for unification,” per earlier speeches, may have been the last signal that the CCP wanted to give to the DPRK.

viii) 1979 - 1989: Pivot to Domestic and Academic Significance

Three years after Mao’s death, a year after Hua Guofeng’s replacement by Deng Xiaoping as Mao’s successor, and the year when U.S.-PRC relations were normalized, 1979 marked a watershed moment in Chinese history on all accounts. The following years witnessed a significant reeling back of politically-charged rhetoric, and topics considered taboo during the Cultural Revolution were more openly discussed. While this allowed for the proliferation of academic studies on veterans’ experiences during the Korean War, the CCP refrained from hosting central commemoration events. A potential explanation is the souring PRC-DPRK relations amid Deng’s rapprochement with capitalist countries and his resolve to prevent

⁸¹ “Liaoning sheng geweihui Shenyang budui Shenyang shi geweihui deng jisao kang Mei yuan Chao lieshimu” 辽宁省革委会 沈阳部队沈阳市革委会等 祭扫抗美援朝烈士墓 [Liaoning Province Revolutionary Committee Shenyang Division, Shenyang Municipal Revolutionary Committee and others sweep Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea Martyrs' Cemetery], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 26, 1975, accessed August 16, 2019.

⁸² Shen and Xia, *A Misunderstood Friendship*, 229.

⁸³ Ibid.

entanglement in another Korean war.

Since 1979, posthumously reinstated Peng Dehuai was oft invoked in news articles. A 1979 *PLA Daily* article by Deng Hua, Li Zhimin, and Hong Xuezhi, all high-ranking PLA soldiers and Korean War veterans, reminisced how they “deeply miss[ed] the respected and loved commander Comrade Peng Dehuai,” reflecting on his brilliance as a military strategist and politician, and his admirable qualities that rendered him as “a model that we should learn from forever.”⁸⁴ Similar articles throughout this period hailed Peng as a hero that everyone must learn from.⁸⁵ The posthumous exoneration of Peng allowed a part of the Korean War’s historical memory to be at least tolerated, if not incorporated, by CCP leaders.

Additionally, starting from the 1985 publication of *The Political Work of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army during the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea*, China saw a significant increase in academic research with approvals or publications by government-affiliated organizations.⁸⁶ That the aforementioned book was “written over 20 years ago but was shelved due to historical reasons,” according to a *People’s Daily* article, all the more emphasized how the politically relaxed environment contributed to the increase in Korean War research in China.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, this political environment did not contribute to the proliferation of general

⁸⁴ Deng Hua 邓华, Li Zhimin 李志民, and Hong Xuezhi 洪学智, “Yingxiong qipo chui qiangu guoji jingshen zhao wanmin” 英雄气魄垂千古 国际精神召万民 [Everlasting heroic spirit, international spirit that gathers the nation], *PLA Daily*, October 25, 1979, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/14154023>.

⁸⁵ Some examples include Han Xianchu 韩先楚, and Jie Fang 解方, “Kang Mei yuan Chao zhanzheng zhong de Peng zong” 抗美援朝战争中的彭总 [Marshal Peng during the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, November 3, 1980, accessed August 16, 2019; and Wang Chengguang 王承光, “Mao Zedong junshi sixiang de zhongyao zucheng bufen” 毛泽东军事思想的重要组成部分 [Important component of Mao Zedong’s military thought], *PLA Daily*, October 25, 1988, accessed January 16, 2020, <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/14324847>.

⁸⁶ Mao Guoqiang 毛国强, “《Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun kang Mei yuan Chao zhanzheng zhengzhi gongzuo》chuban” 《中国人民志愿军抗美援朝战争政治工作》出版 [Publication of *The Political Work of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army during the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea*], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 24, 1985, accessed August 16, 2019.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Korean War commemoration events. To the best of the author's knowledge, there was not a single CCP-hosted central commemoration event during these years, with only a handful of reports on DPRK-led events; even the 30th anniversary was overlooked in 1980. There are only intermittent reports of regional tomb-sweeping or wreath presentation events at the Martyrs Cemetery, but none of these reports included political commentary or speeches.⁸⁸

This reluctance to celebrate the Korean War may be due to the growing divergence between the PRC and DPRK under Deng's economic reform policies, combined with Deng's reluctance to take a conciliatory attitude to North Korea during most of his tenure. Shen and Xia state that "China's post-1978 policy of 'reform and opening' to the outside world shattered the economic foundation of the Sino-North Korean 'special relationship,'" and warming relations between Beijing and Seoul further worried the DPRK leadership.⁸⁹ In 1985, Deng even stated that "[China] should not give the North Koreans the wrong impression that whatever they ask for [China] will give them," and, after Vietnam and Albania's falling out with Beijing, "[China] should be prepared for the third one [North Korea] to fall out with [China]."⁹⁰ Deng's reluctance to maintain a conciliatory approach to the DPRK, as well as his prioritization of rapprochement

⁸⁸ See, for instance, "Liaoning sheng Shenyang shi gejie he zhujun jisao kang Mei yuan Chao lieshimu" 辽宁省沈阳市各界和驻军 祭扫抗美援朝烈士墓 [Liaoning province Shenyang city's various circles and garrison sweep Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea Martyrs' Cemetery], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 26, 1980, accessed August 16, 2019; "Liaoning gejie daibiao xiang kang Mei yuan Chao lieshimu jingxian huaquan jinian Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun fu Chao canzhan 31 zhounian" 辽宁各界代表向抗美援朝烈士墓敬献花圈 纪念中国人民志愿军赴朝参战31周年 [Liaoning province representatives of various circles offer wreaths at Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea Martyrs' Cemetery to celebrate the 31st anniversary of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army's going to Korea and entering the war], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 27, 1981, accessed August 16, 2019; "Shenyang shi juxing jisao huodong daonian kang Mei yuan Chao zhanzheng zhong xisheng de lieshi" 沈阳市举行祭扫活动悼念抗美援朝战争中牺牲的烈士 [Shenyang city holds tomb-sweeping activity to mourn the martyrs of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, April 5, 1984, accessed August 16, 2019; "Liaoning gejie daibiao qingming jisao kang Mei yuan Chao lieshi lingyuan" 辽宁各界代表清明祭扫抗美援朝烈士陵园 [Liaoning Province representatives of various circles sweep the Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea Martyr's Cemetery during Qingming], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, April 6, 1985, accessed August 16, 2019; and "Liaoning sheng he Shenyang shi qunzhong qianwang kang Mei yuan Chao lieshi lingyuan xian huaquan" 辽宁省和沈阳市群众前往抗美援朝烈士陵园献花圈 [Liaoning province and Shenyang city masses go to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea Martyrs' Cemetery and offer wreaths], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 27, 1985, accessed August 16, 2019.

⁸⁹ Shen and Xia, *A Misunderstood Relationship*, 231-233.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 233.

with capitalist countries, all the more alienated the DPRK.

Considering how Korean War commemoration speeches were used as an international signaling tool, the CCP's silence could be interpreted as the party's message to the DPRK that the "special relationship" was no longer, or at least that the PRC was trying to distance itself from the DPRK. Perhaps the CCP itself was unsure of its objectives with DPRK at the time, or at least did not want to publicize them. Indeed, scholars have faced significant difficulties identifying Deng's foreign policy goals toward the DPRK during the 1980s, as reflected in the dearth of scholarly research on the topic. While it is difficult to reach a definitive conclusion on Deng's intentions, one thing is clear—PRC-DPRK relations were increasingly waning.

ix) 1989 - 1990: Tiananmen Square

With improved PRC-DPRK ties in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square incident, the years 1989 and 1990 marked the return of Korean War commemoration; the rhetoric itself, however, suggested that the CCP's bigger objective was domestic consolidation rather than international signaling or affirmation of PRC-DPRK ties.

Existing scholarship suggests that Deng's approach to the DPRK changed in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square incident, which brought forth international backlash and criticism of the CCP's violation of human rights. Shen and Xia claim that "[i]n the wake of the Tiananmen Square incident and the fall of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, in 1989 . . . Beijing and Pyongyang became fellow sufferers who could commiserate with each other."⁹¹ Song's research into Deng's perspective on the Korean War similarly notes how Deng, after the Tiananmen Square incident, argued that Western countries and the United States had no

⁹¹ Ibid.

right to criticize China of “human rights violations” considering the high casualties they inflicted on China during the war.⁹²

Reflecting these improved bilateral ties was the revival of Korean War commemoration events after a more-than-a-decade long hiatus, with the CCP’s October celebration of the 40th anniversary of its entry to the Korean War.⁹³ During the event, Zhou Wen Yuan, Vice-Chair of the PLA’s General Political Department, stated that the “great victory” of the Korean War protected China’s safety and world peace, allowed for China’s national reconstruction, raised the Chinese people’s political consciousness and national pride, stimulated the country’s revolutionary energy, and promoted China’s national defense and modernization.⁹⁴ He then noted that the “profound friendship” with the North Korean people was formed during the war and survived the test of time during the post-war decades.⁹⁵ This invocation of PRC-DPRK ties suggested that the CCP indeed warmed up to the DPRK after the Tiananmen Square incident, again emphasizing the international signaling value of the Korean War.

This acknowledgement of ties, however, was the farthest the CCP would go in highlighting its relations with North Korea; the rest of the speech suggested that since 1990 the CCP pivoted toward emphasizing the Korean War’s domestic historical significance than its international legacies. The vast majority of the *People’s Daily* article covering the 1980 event

⁹² Song Jin, “Deng Xiaoping guanyu kang Mei yuan Chao de ruogan shidian tanxi” 邓小平关于抗美援朝的若干视点探析 [Analysis of Deng Xiaoping’s View on the Movement to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea], *Military Historical Research* 军事历史研究 1 (2001): 28-35.

⁹³ Luo Yuwen 罗玉文, and Luo Tongsong 罗同松, “Minzhengbu zongzheng zaijing lianhe zhaokai zuotanhui jinian zhiyuanjun fu Chao canzhan 40 zhounian qiangdiao shizhong gaoju aiguo zhuyi de weida qizhi” 民政部总政在京联合召开座谈会 纪念志愿军赴朝参战 40 周年 强调始终高举爱国主义的伟大旗帜 [General Administration of the Ministry of Civil Affairs jointly hosts a forum in Beijing to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the People’s Volunteer Army entering North Korea to fight the war, emphasized to always hold high the great flag of patriotism], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 25, 1990, accessed February 22, 2020.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

focused on the speeches by various “comrades” including former PVA Commander Yang Dezhi, which barely mentioned the DPRK and discussed mainly the domestic takeaways of the war. Specifically, these speeches argued that the greatest legacy of the war was the “spirit” it embodied, such as the unity of people under patriotism, revolutionary heroism, and the CCP’s correct leadership that led to ultimate victory.⁹⁶ The speeches concluded that this “spirit” must be applied in the modern context to promote the nation’s and the military’s Socialist modernization.⁹⁷ This new emphasis of the “spirit” of the Korean War diverted attention away from the notion of “struggle” against an adversary or wartime specificities, including who the enemy was or who fought with the Chinese—indeed, not even once was the United States or “imperialism” mentioned besides in the slogan “Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea.” The speeches instead emphasized the Chinese people’s conduct and accomplishments during the war—what the speeches called the war’s “spirit.” This domestic shift in attention in turn allowed for domestic rallying of the people toward ongoing CCP projects—in this case “modernization”—under the “correct leadership” of the CCP.

The developments in the Korean War narrative from 1989 to 1990 demonstrated the CCP’s prioritization of the Korean War’s domestic propaganda value over international signaling, amid uncertainties in China’s relationship with the DPRK and growing ties with the United States. The revival of only the October commemorations—and not the June events—further demonstrated this domestic emphasis. In particular, the newly coined concept of a uniquely Chinese “spirit” that called for the Chinese nation to work toward the country’s Socialist modernization paralleled Deng’s 1986 initiative of “Socialist Spiritual Civilization,”

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

which aimed at strengthening the CCP's political-ideological control over the country and continuing the country's socialist development.⁹⁸ Thus, while the revival of Korean War commemoration may have been influenced by warming PRC-DPRK ties, these international objectives were overshadowed by the war narrative's domestic propaganda messages.

x) **1993: PRC-ROK Rapprochement**

Starting from the 1990s, there were very few commemoration events except ten-year anniversary speeches. Regardless, the 1990s witnessed one unique commemoration event of the war: the opening ceremony of the Memorial of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea in 1993.⁹⁹ Hu Jintao's speech at the event demonstrated the CCP's continuing emphasis on the domestic takeaways of the Korean War; his lack of emphasis on PRC-DPRK ties, on the other hand, reflected China's improving relations with the United States and South Korea, and these new partners' subsequent challenges to China's previously DPRK-centric war narrative.

Hu's Korean War narrative, at first glance, was emphatically domestically oriented. First, Hu's speech barely mentions the DPRK. Claiming that China entered the war when "the DPRK was at a critical juncture and [China's] safety was seriously threatened," Hu praised the "wise decision" of the CCP and Mao to enter the war.¹⁰⁰ Hu then stated that the Chinese PVA, under the

⁹⁸ Feng Chen, "Rebuilding the Party's Normative Authority: China's Socialist Spiritual Civilization Campaign," *Problems of Post-Communism* 45, no. 6 (November/December 1998): 33-41, DOI:10.1080/10758216.1998.11655812; Yeonsik Choi, "The Evolution of 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics': Its Elliptical Structure of Socialist Principles and China's Realities," *Pacific Focus* XXVI, no. 3 (December 2011): 385-404, DOI: 10.1111/j.1976-5118.2011.01070.x.

⁹⁹ Wei Yunheng 魏运亨, and Zhao Dean 赵德安, "Kang Mei yuan Chao jinianguan zai Dandong kaiguan Deng Xiaoping wei jinianta tizi Jiang Zemin Li Peng Liu Huaqing tici Hu Jintao chuxi kaiguan dianli bing fabiao jianghua" 抗美援朝纪念馆在丹东开馆 邓小平为纪念馆题字 江泽民李鹏刘华清题词 胡锦涛出席开馆典礼并发表讲话 [Memorial of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea opens in Dandong; Deng Xiaoping writes for memorial tower; Jiang Zemin, Li Peng, Liu Huaqing writes dedication; Hu Jintao attends opening ceremony and delivers speech], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, July 26, 1993, accessed August 16, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

leadership of Peng Dehuai, created a heroic feat that shocked the world.¹⁰¹ Touting the Korean War “spirit” as did the 1990 speech, Hu called for the Chinese people to inherit the patriotism and revolutionary heroism of the Korean War and contribute to China’s reconstruction, Socialist modernization, and unification.¹⁰² Nowhere did the article mention China’s “combat friendship” with DPRK as did earlier speeches. By emphasizing China’s national security and mentioning only the PVA’s “feats,” Hu delivered a domestically centered narrative that barely acknowledged the DPRK.

Hu’s speech also significantly toned down accusations against the United States. Hu stated that the world was moving from a bipolar to a multipolar world, and argued that China needed a stable long-term environment in both domestic and international realms to continue its progress toward modernization. Hu also emphasized that China never was and never will claim to dominate the world and threaten any country.¹⁰³ Not once mentioning “U.S. imperialists” or any enemy for that matter, Hu significantly deviated from earlier, more aggressive speeches that rallied the country for a continued struggle against a clearly labeled adversary.

This shift in the Korean War narrative suggested the CCP’s attempt to adjust the war narrative’s international signal to accommodate its new partners—the United States and South Korea—without alienating the DPRK. After normalization of PRC-ROK relations in 1992, China received requests from South Korea to amend its textbooks to a less pro-DPRK narrative, and affirmed to the ROK government its willingness to discuss the matter with relevant textbook publishers.¹⁰⁴ Hu’s lack of any comments on China’s relations with the DPRK, descriptions of

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ “Junggukkyogwaseo waegokgisul sijeong chokgu” 中國 교과서 왜곡 기술 시정 촉구 [Call for rectification of distorted description in Chinese textbooks], *Yonhap News*, June 23, 1993, accessed March 16, 2020, <https://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=100&oid=001&aid=0003748077>.

specific enemies, and characterization of the war as a “victory” (the slogans did imply a victory, but coverage of Hu’s speech never mentioned the word), all could have been efforts to balance the conflicting demands of China’s new international partners. The fact that South Korean news coverage interpreted the event as a reaffirmation of Chinese ties to North Korea suggested that while China’s new narrative was clearly less emphatic of its PRC-DPRK ties, it was not wholly conforming to ROK standards either.¹⁰⁵ This intentional ambivalence may all the more suggest the conflicting demands the CCP faced and the party’s attempt to placate all counterparts involved.

Meanwhile, the narrative’s domestic orientation may have been in coordination with the CCP’s Patriotic Education Campaign. Launched in 1991, the campaign aimed at educating China’s new generation of the country’s “humiliating” past, the role of the “West” in China’s suffering, and the CCP’s role in reviving the country’s glory.¹⁰⁶ As the CCP’s response to the Tiananmen Square incident, this campaign “used historical education as an instrument for the glorification of the party, for the consolidation of the PRC’s national identity, and for the justification of . . . the CCP’s one party rule.”¹⁰⁷ The new Korean War narrative fit squarely into this mold: the “West”—the United States—threatened China’s national security, but China was able to persevere under the “wise” leadership of the CCP, and the new generation must learn from this historical past and continue to mobilize under the CCP’s guidance. Here again, the Korean War narrative thus served a dual purpose: domestically, to rally the public and bolster the

¹⁰⁵ “[Chojoom] Jungguk, hangukjeonhyujeon 40junyeonmaja daebukmilchak bugak” [초점] 中國, 한국전쟁 40주년 맞아 對北 밀착 부각 [[Focus] China emphasizes ties with North Korea in commemorating 40th anniversary of Korean War Armistice], *Yonhap News*, July 23, 1993, accessed April 5, 2020, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=001&oid=001&aid=0003677104>.

¹⁰⁶ Zheng Wang, “National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China,” *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (December 2008): 784, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29734264>.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 784 and 788-89.

CCP's legitimacy after the Tiananmen Square incident, and internationally, to balance the historical claims of both new and existing diplomatic partners.

xi) 2000: Jiang Zemin's Speech

In 2000, the CCP hosted a 50th anniversary event for the PVA's entry to the Korean War.¹⁰⁸ In his speech, Jiang Zemin, then President of the PRC, highlighted the Korean War "spirit," discouraged military buildup, and touted ethnic diversity as the key to peace, reflecting growing domestic ethnic challenges and need for stability to promote economic development. Meanwhile, by being the first to call the war a "civil war" at an official CCP commemoration event, Jiang further distanced China from the DPRK and incorporated other international partners into the Korean War narrative.

Like Hu, Jiang invoked the concept of the "spirit of resisting U.S. aggression and aiding Korea," praising the accomplishments of the PVA during the war. Jiang argued that the victory was the result of the "wise leadership of the CCP and Mao Zedong" that helped realize the PVA's "political advantage" and "glorious tradition of [the Chinese] military," and paid respect to the "older generation of proletarian revolutionists and Chinese PVA" and "the martyrs." Jiang then called for the Chinese people to learn from this "spirit" and moral character and "carry forward patriotism and revolutionary heroism," putting this spirit toward the "CCP's and the country's various projects," including Socialist modernization, unification, and peaceful development of the world.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Jiang Zemin 江泽民, "Zai shoudu gejie jinian Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun kang Mei yuan Chao chuguo zuozhan wushi zhounian dahui shang de jianghua" 在首都各界纪念中国人民志愿军抗美援朝出国作战五十周年大会上的讲话 [Speech delivered at the capital convention of various circles for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army's going abroad and fighting], *People's Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 26, 2000, accessed August 16, 2019.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Meanwhile, portraying China as the upholder of international diversity and peace, Jiang stated that “history ha[d] already proven that . . . strengthening military alliances and military preparation cannot foster long-term peace,” and that peace was only possible through “respecting the sovereign decisions of each country’s people and global diversity.”¹¹⁰ Arguing that no country has the right to claim hegemony or invade other countries’ sovereignties, Jiang characterized China as “an everlasting firm force of upholding world peace and promoting world progress.”¹¹¹ Jiang concluded his speech by calling for “all of the CCP and people of all ethnic groups” to unite under Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, and the CCP’s basic line.¹¹²

Jiang also further distanced China from the DPRK and accommodated its new international partners, with two notable changes. Jiang’s speech was the first official CCP Korean War speech since the 1960s that gave credit to the Soviet Union for assisting China during the war, signaling improved China-Russia relations.¹¹³ More importantly, however, Jiang’s was the first of all Korean War commemoration speeches to call the war the “Korean Civil War” and to state that China entered the war “upon the request of the Worker’s Party of Korea and the North Korean government.”¹¹⁴ This characterization exonerated China from the liability of the Korean War by suggesting that the war was a strictly Korean issue. Simultaneously, it elided the United States as the starter of the war, although Jiang nevertheless blamed the United States for “armed intervention” into Korea and “threatening the safety of the

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

newly established People's Republic of China.”¹¹⁵

Jiang's speech marked a significant evolution of the Korean War narrative's international message, accommodating South Korean and U.S. narratives of the war while avoiding alienation of the DPRK. With the growth of available Soviet archival material, it became increasingly difficult to deny that North Korea started the war, and South Korea had been requesting the CCP to correct its historical narrative to accommodate this fact. Not explicitly stating that North Korea started the war may have been the CCP's attempt to not fully reject the North Korean narrative that the war was its struggle for “liberation” against “imperialist invasion”; the deliberate use of ambiguity seen in 1993 is applied again.

Nevertheless, the CCP used this edited narrative to signal its discontent toward the United States. The 1999 NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade led to heightened Chinese anti-U.S. sentiments, with Vice President Hu notably condemning “the barbaric act of NATO, led by the United States” and translating the bombing as an “invasion” as well as a breach of “sovereignty” and “justice.”¹¹⁶ If Hu's response to the bombing could be seen as an adoption of Korean War “talking points,” Jiang's speech further bolstered this traditional criticism against the United States by framing it as guilty of “meddling in other countries affairs.”

Jiang's presentation of the party as the upholder of diversity, on the other hand, may have been both a domestic and international message to global criticism of the CCP for human rights violations, amid government crackdowns against rising ethnic unrest in Xinjiang during the

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ “Ziliao: 1999 nian 5 yue 9 ri Hu Jintao jiu wozhu Nan shiguan zao xiji fabiao jianghua” 资料: 1999年5月9日胡锦涛就我驻南使馆遭袭击发表讲话 [Source: May 9th 1999 Hu Jintao delivers speech on the attack on our embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia], *China News*, May 25, 2003, accessed March 26, 2020, <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2003-05-25/14421097103.shtml>.

1990s.¹¹⁷ His last call for unity of “people of all ethnic groups” sent a domestic message that the CCP is infallible, particularly in its approach to Chinese minority ethnic groups, and an international one that it will not accept any foreign criticism on the matter. The Korean War narrative thus maintained its dual propagandistic value for the CCP even in the 21st century.

xii) 2010: Xi Jinping’s Speech

The latest CCP-led Korean War commemoration event was the 60th anniversary forum on China’s entering the war in 2010.¹¹⁸ While Xi Jinping, then Vice President of the PRC, adopted most of Jiang’s narrative, he was more assertive in both domestic and international messages, further emphasizing ethnic unity and assuming a larger role in the Korean peninsula.

Reiterating that the Korean War was a “victory” in a “righteous war of upholding peace and resisting invasion,” Xi highlighted the PVA’s patriotism, revolutionary spirit, and internationalism.¹¹⁹ Emphasizing that commemorating the Korean War was “not for extending antagonism . . . but to learn from historical experiences to gain long-term lessons,” Xi called for the country to unite under the CCP and Hu Jintao’s leadership, and promote the party’s socialist policies and the “great revival of the Chinese people.”¹²⁰ Xi framed the United States as China’s antagonist, guilty of forcing the war upon the Chinese people and of “armed interference” in

¹¹⁷ See, for instance, Seth Faison, “THE JIANG VISIT: THE MAIN ISSUE; U.S. Refrain on Human Rights Strikes No Chords With Jiang,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1997, accessed February 26, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/02/world/jiang-visit-main-issue-us-refrain-human-rights-strikes-no-chords-with-jiang.html>. For an example of the CCP’s crackdown and Western response, see Patrick E. Tyler, “In China’s Far West, Tensions With Ethnic Muslims Boil Over in Riots and Bombings,” *New York Times*, February 28, 1997, accessed March 26, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/02/28/world/in-china-s-far-west-tensions-with-ethnic-muslims-boil-over-in-riots-and-bombings.html>; and “Xinjiang, China’s Restive Northwest,” *Human Rights Watch*, accessed March 26, 2020, https://www.hrw.org/legacy/campaigns/china-98/sj_xnj2.htm.

¹¹⁸ Xi Jinping 习近平, “Zai jinian Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun kang Mei yuan Chao chuguo zuozhan 60 zhounian zuotanhui shang de jianghua” 在纪念中国人民志愿军抗美援朝出国作战60周年座谈会上的讲话 [Speech delivered at the forum commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army’s going abroad and fighting the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 25, 2010, accessed August 19, 2019.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Korean affairs. By maintaining that the Korean War was a civil war and that China intervened only upon the request of the North Korean government, Xi exonerated the CCP from the potential criticism that it was also guilty of “armed interference.”¹²¹ Line by line, Xi’s general narrative paralleled that of Jiang in its domestic and international messages.

Xi’s speech was unique, however, in that it extensively described the Korean War’s “victory” as a result of China’s national ethnical unity. Xi stated that the PVA’s “victory . . . [wa]s inseparable from the vigorous support from people of all ethnicities across the country.”¹²² Xi then defined the Korean War “spirit” as “a powerful force of people of all ethnicities across the country bound by a bitter hatred of a common enemy and vanquishing the enemy to score victory.”¹²³ Calling for the nation to unite again under the “spirit” of the Korean War, Xi emphasized the ongoing need for promoting ethnic unity under the CCP’s leadership. Significantly ramped up from Jiang’s rhetoric of ethnic diversity, Xi’s rallying was most likely a response to the ongoing ethnic conflicts within China, with memories of the deadly July 2009 Urumqi riots still fresh.¹²⁴ The rising domestic need for ethnic control thus made its way into the Korean War narrative through a new emphasis on ethnicity in the description of the 1950s war effort.

Additionally, unlike Jiang who distanced China from the Korean peninsula, Xi assigned a greater role to China in maintaining peace in the region to prevent spillover instability in Chinese borders. Stating that “fostering . . . a regional environment of good-neighborliness” was

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ For more details, see Tania Branigan, “Ethnic Violence in China Leaves 140 Dead,” *Guardian*, July 6, 2009, accessed February 26, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jul/06/china-riots-uighur-xinjiang>; Edward Wong, “Riots in Western China Amid Ethnic Tension,” *New York Times*, July 5, 2009, accessed February 26, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/06/world/asia/06china.html>.

“necessary” for China’s realization of peaceful development, Xi further emphasized that China “devot[ed] itself to upholding the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula.”¹²⁵ Indeed, the 2000s witnessed China’s greater involvement in the peninsula as reflected in China’s role in running Six Party Talks to discuss North Korea’s denuclearization from 2003. This rhetoric also echoed the CCP’s so-called “China’s Peaceful Rise” policy to use China’s economy and diplomacy to allow for the country’s economic growth while catalyzing global peace.¹²⁶ Xi’s alteration of the Korean War narrative to fit domestic and international objectives of the CCP again underlined the versatility of the narrative as a propaganda tool.

¹²⁵ Xi Jinping 习近平, “Zai jinian Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun kang Mei yuan Chao chuguo zuozhan 60 zhounian zuotanhui shang de jianghua” 在纪念中国人民志愿军抗美援朝出国作战60周年座谈会上的讲话 [Speech delivered at the forum commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army’s going abroad and fighting the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea], *People’s Daily — Renmin Ribao (1946-Present)*, October 25, 2010, accessed August 19, 2019.

¹²⁶ For more information on the “China’s Peaceful Rise,” please refer to Esther Pan, “The Promise and Pitfalls of China’s ‘Peaceful Rise,’” *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 14, 2006, accessed March 17, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/background/promise-and-pitfalls-chinas-peaceful-rise>.

IV. Significance and Conclusions

The above analysis of the CCP's Korean War narrative spans 60 years of the party's active use of commemoration events as a propaganda platform for communicating its domestic and international objectives to the public. What, then, do these 60 years tell us?

If the CCP's sweeping changes to its Korean War narrative can be attributed to contemporary political needs, then the descriptions that remained constant over time reveal CCP objectives that are as applicable today as they were since their inception in 1950. The Korean War commemoration speeches showed four consistencies. First, the war has always been trumpeted as a victory, despite changes to who is considered responsible for it—China, North Korea, or both. This description is contrary to what we know today; records of private arguments between Chinese and Soviet leaders in the 1960s blaming each other for starting the war make it clear that the CCP did not consider the war as “glorious” as the speeches suggested.¹²⁷ The speeches' consistent portrayal of the decision to enter the war as a brilliant success and reluctance to admit the war's shortcomings, then, demonstrate the CCP's desire to present itself as an infallible leader of the Chinese people; this perpetual correctness, in turn, is the CCP's source of political legitimacy.

In addition to political legitimacy, this consistency may reflect the party's consideration of the Chinese military and veterans. Perhaps the government simply could not afford to admit its mistake and risk disgracing the cause for which thousands of Chinese soldiers had lost their lives. The military's significant role in the Chinese political sphere may also increase the CCP's reluctance to admit its mistake, since doing so may bring not only the party's competence but

¹²⁷ See, for instance, the discussion between Chinese Politburo member Peng Zhen and Soviet Communist Party Chairman Nikita Khrushchev on June 22, 1960, during their meeting in Bucharest, Romania. Yang Kuisong, “Introduction,” in *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War: Trilateral Communist Relations in the 1950s* (Milton Park, Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 2-3.

also the military's on the line. The fact that these speeches consistently paid homage to martyrs and that recent speeches even credited the "older generation of revolutionaries and the PVA" for the "victory" of the Korean War doubly suggests the CCP's wariness of the military.

Yet another explanation is that the CCP is trying to alleviate domestic fear of the United States by portraying China as its legitimate—and victorious—challenger. Yu Yong Tae's study on Chinese textbooks, for instance, argues that the Chinese government aimed at relieving Chinese students' fear toward the United States and strengthening their nationalist sentiments by trumpeting the Korean War as a massive success.¹²⁸ The speeches' continued labeling the United States as China's opponent further suggests the CCP's self-perceived rivalry with the United States and consequential desire to eliminate domestic fear toward this national rival.

Indeed, a second continuity in these speeches is that the adversary of the war is always clear: the United States. While the level of blame attached to the United States fluctuated over time, the title bestowed to the war—"the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea"—left the CCP's ultimate adversary obvious. Even speeches that criticized South Korea's "invasion" of North Korea claimed that the United States "ordered" Rhee Syng-man, then South Korean president, to start the war, and all countries in the UN forces were labeled as U.S. "followers" or "puppets," bringing the audience's attention back to the United States.

A similar attitude of hostility is shown in other sites of CCP commemoration of the Korean War. Jung Keun-Sik's research even reveals that when the Memorial of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea was opened in 1993, there was internal debate on whether "the U.S. Seventh Fleet's blockade of the Taiwan Strait . . . should be described as an 'invasion' or an

¹²⁸ Yu Yong-Tae 유용태, "Jungguk yeoksagyogwaseoui hyeondaesa insikgwa gukgajuui: hyeondae hanguksareul jungsimeuro" 중국 역사교과서의 현대사 인식과 국가주의: 현대 한국사를 중심으로 [Modern History Awareness and Nationalism in Chinese History Textbooks: Focusing on Modern Korean History], *The Korean History Education Review* 84 (December 2002): 213.

‘entry’ into Chinese territorial waters.”¹²⁹ Despite Jiang Zemin’s concern that “the expression could lead to diplomatic problems,” ultimately “the Chinese leadership went with ‘invasion,’ maintaining the conventional Chinese narrative that the Korean War resulted from an American invasion.”¹³⁰

That the CCP deliberately chose to maintain this narrative of hostility even after normalization of U.S.-PRC relations suggests that the party saw political advantages in doing so that outweighed the risk of potential “diplomatic problems.” One possible explanation, as suggested above, is that the CCP genuinely sees the United States as its rival—if not an enemy—to this day. Indeed, as Deng Xiaoping’s famous quote to “hide your strength and bide your time” implies, the CCP may be perceiving the United States as a rival to be fought against for more international leadership or even potentially in direct military terms. If true, then this notion will bear major significance in understanding the PRC’s future global role and its motives behind contemporary policies of international expansion, directly addressing the decades-long debate on the future of U.S.-China relations and the possibility of avoiding competition between the two countries.¹³¹

Third, the CCP never revealed that the DPRK started the Korean War; the blame was instead attached to the United States, South Korea under U.S. orders, or not mentioned altogether. This reluctance to blame North Korea can be seen as the CCP’s implicit support of the DPRK while balancing competing demands from the ROK for a revised historical narrative. By not refuting the DPRK’s claim that it did not begin the war and saving the DPRK from

¹²⁹ Jung Keun-Sik, “China’s Memory and Commemoration of the Korean War in the Memorial Hall of the ‘War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea,’” *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, no. 14 (March 2015), 69.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ For instance, see Zbigniew Brzezinski and John J. Mearsheimer, “Clash of the Titans,” *Foreign Policy*, October 22, 2009, accessed April 6, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/22/clash-of-the-titans/>.

international embarrassment, the CCP signaled that it was still attentive to the needs and demands of North Korea, one of China's few remaining Communist allies. Against the backdrop of recent speculations on how far China will push North Korea to give up its nuclear arsenal, this reluctance of the CCP to completely sever ties with North Korea, even as it distanced itself from the DPRK more than ever, bears all the more significance in shedding light on the often elusive PRC policies toward North Korea.¹³²

Lastly, despite the speeches' characterization of the PRC as a peace-cherishing state, they consistently justified China's entry to the Korean War in terms of national security, suggesting the CCP's willingness to use military power beyond its borders in the face of security threats. This implication highlights the CCP's notion of maintaining buffer states around its borders, and equating an attack on any of these states as a direct attack on China. That the CCP has never altered this argument to protect a buffer state for the sake of national security imply that, should push come to shove, the party may be willing to opt for that path again, which would have significant implications to Asia's regional security.

Beyond the fine print, however, the case of Korean War commemoration holds significance of its own. As the first international war that the PRC engaged in, it set the precedent for all later national mobilization speeches and propaganda against perceived international threats. Indeed, although DPRK-led events were not included in this study due to its scope, some CCP leaders' speeches in such events demonstrated the party's adoption of Korean

¹³² See, for instance, Zhu Feng, "China's North Korean Liability: How Washington Can Get Beijing to Rein In Pyongyang," *Foreign Affairs*, July 11, 2017, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2017-07-11/chinas-north-korean-liability>; and Evan Osnos, "Why China Won't Pressure North Korea As Much As Trump Wants," *New Yorker*, September 19, 2017, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/why-china-isnt-ready-to-put-pressure-on-north-korea>.

War “talking points” in other border conflicts. For instance, at the DPRK embassy’s 1962 Korean War commemoration event, State Council Deputy Prime Minister Luo Ruiqing accused India of lacking “sincerity” to resolve the China-India border issue peacefully, claiming that if India had such sincerity, it would not reject China’s suggestion of a peaceful resolution.¹³³ This rhetoric paralleled that of Zhou Enlai’s 1953 declaration on Korean War armistice discussions, where he argued that if the UN forces had the “sincere desire to seek peace,” they would be able to accept China’s “reasonable” suggestions.¹³⁴ Hu Jintao’s aforementioned 1999 response to the NATO bombing similarly suggested the adoption of Korean War propaganda for other military conflicts, with the familiar argument that China is a peace-cherishing nation striving to reach a peaceful resolution even when under siege of belligerent states.¹³⁵ Studying the CCP’s Korean War narrative can thus greatly contribute to understanding how CCP propaganda for later conflicts developed and how the party communicates its foreign policy objectives to its domestic public.

More broadly, the Korean War exemplifies how states use historical narratives as a malleable political propaganda tool. Especially when there is insufficient or mixed information on the given state’s objectives—as was the case for China and North Korea—public commemoration of historical events that reflect major domestic and global politics may thus serve as a reliable source for understanding state intentions. This method can be especially useful for studying single-party, authoritarian governments; the connection between the narrative and

¹³³ “Zhongguo renmin yongyuan zhichi Guba geming” 中国人民永远支持古巴革命 [The Chinese people will support the Cuban Revolution forever], *PLA Daily*, October 26, 1962, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/13941540>.

¹³⁴ Zhou Enlai 周恩来, “Guanyu Chaoxian tingzhan tanpan wenti de shengming” 关于朝鲜停战谈判问题的声明 [Statement on the Korean Armistice Negotiations], in *Jian guo yi lai Zhou Enlai wen gao* 建国以来周恩来文稿 [The manuscripts of Zhou Enlai since the Founding of the Nation], 1st ed, vol. 8 (Beijing, China: Zhong yang wen xian chu ban she, 2008), p. 221.

¹³⁵ “Ziliao: 1999 nian 5 yue 9 ri Hu Jintao jiu wozhu Nan shiguan zao xiji fabiao jianghua” 资料: 1999年5月9日胡锦涛就我驻南使馆遭袭击发表讲话 [Source: May 9th 1999 Hu Jintao delivers speech on the attack on our embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia], *China News*, May 25, 2003, accessed March 26, 2020, <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2003-05-25/14421097103.shtml>.

the state's political objectives would be clearer since there would be fewer competing perspectives, while the state's stricter control of available information would all the more require measures to glean insights from public sources.

The year in which this research is conducted coincides with the 70th anniversary of the Korean War. From Xi's initial cold shoulder to Kim Jong-un to his first visit to the DPRK in June 20, 2019, from Trump's rhetoric of "fire and fury" to the first U.S.-DPRK summit, and from tensions over the South China Sea to the recent signs of peace after the U.S.-PRC trade war, the years 2011 to 2020 have witnessed significant developments in China's relations with its East Asian neighbors and the United States.¹³⁶ This year's 70th anniversary commemoration of the Korean War would be a promising opportunity to understand how the CCP interpreted this tumultuous period and how it plans to navigate another eventful decade to come.

(12,345 words, excluding footnotes, bibliographic essay, and bibliography)

¹³⁶ Eleanor Albert, "The China–North Korea Relationship," *Council on Foreign Relations*, updated June 25, 2019, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/background/china-north-korea-relationship>; Jane Perlez, "Xi Jinping Arrives in North Korea, With Many Eyes on Trump," *New York Times*, June 20, 2019, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/20/world/asia/xi-jinping-china-north-korea.html>; David E. Sanger, "How Trump Went From 'Fire and Fury' to Dismissing North Korean Nuclear Advances," *New York Times*, July 4, 2018, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/04/us/politics/trump-north-korea-nuclear.html>; "Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea," *Council on Foreign Relations*, updated February 26, 2020, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/territorial-disputes-south-china-sea>; Peter Eavis, Alan Rappeport, and Ana Swanson, "What's in (and Not in) the U.S.-China Trade Deal," *New York Times*, January 15, 2020, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/15/business/economy/china-trade-deal-text.html>.

Bibliographic Essay

Coming to the topic of this essay was a natural combination of three key academic interests that I pursued at Yale: international relations of Northeast Asia; historical narrative as both the result and influencer of these relations; and my native country, Korea. If I were to pinpoint a time, however, it would be the latter half of the year 2017, amid North Korea's ramping up of nuclear missile tests and U.S. President Donald Trump's warnings of U.S. response of "fire and fury."¹³⁷ During the outpour of speculations about the future of the Korean peninsula, one topic did not cease to appear: what would the PRC do? Indeed, a multitude—if not an overwhelming majority—of scholars and reporters assumed that U.S. success in curbing North Korean missile tests would depend on China's cooperation; what they disagreed upon was whether China would get on board with the United States.¹³⁸ Existing articles on China's strategic and political goals toward North Korea focused primarily on the beginning of the two countries' relations from the Korean War in 1950, then shifted directly to contemporary relations of the 2000s.¹³⁹ The lack of explanation in between seemed to assert that China's policy toward the DPRK has remained constant throughout those decades, a notion I found highly unlikely. Considering the tumultuous changes in China's political priorities and diplomatic relations—especially rapprochement with the United States and South Korea—I believed that PRC-DPRK relations would have undergone significant changes. Fortuitously, I was at the time taking a course on China's use of the past, studying how the CCP actively uses historical narratives to fit

¹³⁷ For instance, see Joshua Berlinger, "North Korea's Missile Tests: What You Need to Know," *CNN News*, December 3, 2017, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/05/29/asia/north-korea-missile-tests/index.html>; and Jim Sciutto, Barbara Starr, and Zachary Cohen, "Trump Promises North Korea 'Fire and Fury' over Nuke Threat," *CNN Politics*, August 9, 2017, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/08/politics/north-korea-missile-ready-nuclear-weapons/index.html>.

¹³⁸ See, for instance, Zhu Feng, "China's North Korean Liability: How Washington Can Get Beijing to Rein In Pyongyang," *Foreign Affairs*, July 11, 2017, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2017-07-11/chinas-north-korean-liability>.

¹³⁹ One example is Eleanor Albert, "The China-North Korea Relationship," *Council on Foreign Relations*, updated June 25, 2019, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-north-korea-relationship>.

its political goals. Hence, I started to look into how China has crafted its historical narrative about North Korea, by studying the event that is credited to have founded the modern PRC-DPRK relationship: the Korean War.

A number of primary sources came to my mind. My initial choice was publications on the history of the war, such as the *History of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea*.¹⁴⁰ These books, most often compiled or approved by the Chinese military, no doubt offered a historical narrative of the Korean War curated directly by the government. However, most of these books were published in relatively recent years, with no publications during the 1960s and 70s. Additionally, most of them were written by the military; I quickly realized that I did not have the relevant background knowledge to fully appreciate the provided military details and, even if I did, these would offer more tactical insights than strategic or political ones.

Another promising group of sources was memoirs by veterans or generals that participated in the war.¹⁴¹ Most of these were published in the 1980s, spurred by the posthumous rehabilitation of Peng Dehuai in 1978, leading Marshal of the PVA who was denounced for criticizing CCP policies during the Great Leap Forward.¹⁴² These memoirs provided raw accounts of the war, both on the battlefield and within government cabinets; the memoirs of generals also offered valuable insights into the decision-making process and strategic priorities of the CCP during watershed moments of the Korean War. These narratives, however, only

¹⁴⁰ Junshi kexueyuan junshi lishi yanjiusuo 军事科学院军事历史研究所 [Military History Unit of the Academy of Military Sciences of the Chinese People's Liberation Army], *Kang Mei yuan Chao zhanzhengshi 抗美援朝战争史 [History of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea]*, 3 vols (Beijing, China: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 2014).

¹⁴¹ Examples include Peng Dehuai 彭德怀, *Peng Dehuai Zishu 彭德怀自述* [Peng Dehuai's Memoir] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1981); Nie Rongzhen 聂荣臻, *Nie Rongzhen Huiyilu 聂荣臻回忆录* [Nie Rongzhen's Memoirs] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1984); and Cai Chengwen 柴成文, *Banmendian Tanpan 板门店谈判* [Panmunjom Negotiations] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1989). A major English translation of key leaders' memoirs, albeit abridged, include Li Xiaobing, Allan Reed Millett, and Yu Bin, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001).

¹⁴² Wanli Hu, *Mao's American Strategy and the Korean War* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008), 10; the Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. "Peng Dehuai," last updated October 20, 2019, accessed November 20, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Peng-Dehuai>.

focused on the outbreak and immediate aftermaths of the war; the “afterlife” of it was rarely if ever included. Since these works were not published by the CCP, it was also unclear how reflective they were of the government’s official perspective.

These memoirs’ invocation of certain slogans or CCP leaders’ speeches, however, led me to another primary source—commemoration speeches by CCP leaders. Delivered by party leaders themselves, these speeches directly presented the official stance of the CCP, and often offered justifications and explained the military and political significance of the war. What distinguished these speeches, however, was the fact that these commemorative events were held relatively regularly since 1950. In terms of tracking the CCP’s interpretation of and political goals relevant to the Korean War over time, these speeches thus proved to be ideal primary sources. Since most of these speeches were widely circulated in the news, I also had easy access to these sources, thanks to Yale’s resources including the online archive of the *People’s Daily*.

Upon digging, however, I faced two main obstacles. First, in the *People’s Daily*, there was a visible dearth of Korean War commemoration events from the early 1960s to the late 80s, which made tracing the change of CCP stance over a continuous time frame rather difficult. More critical, however, was that my Chinese language skills, while capable of comprehending the speeches, were not high enough to digest decades’ worth of speeches at a reasonable speed.

To address these limitations, I took a gap year and enrolled in an intensive Chinese language program at Tsinghua University; with my improved Chinese skills, I also tried looking into more sources. I first attempted to access the Foreign Ministry Archive of the PRC, but was told that I would require a letter of recommendation from a Chinese local institution, which I did not have the means to acquire. Knowing that studies on historiography often use textbooks to understand how states craft standardized, “official” historical narratives, I also exhausted the

history textbook collection of the National Library of China, but its limitations were significant as well. Since mandatory education began during Deng Xiaoping's years, this particular medium most likely did not reach a wide audience until at least the 1970s. The library's incomplete collection of older textbooks, the variety of publishers, and multiple grade levels for history courses also made finding a comprehensive collection practically impossible. Lastly, since textbooks focused more on providing an overview of history than an in-depth study of one event, their coverage of the Korean War were insufficient in both volume and depth.

Faced with these limitations, I ultimately decided to focus on speeches. To complement the dearth of speeches in the *People's Daily*, I added another publication—the *People's Liberation Army Daily*—to the list. I also combed through the selected works by key leaders of the CCP to ensure the collection was as complete as possible. These measures led me to over a thousand articles, and I ended up trimming the list to focus on speeches that were designed for Chinese domestic audiences and, when there were multiple speeches for a given year, more weight was given to those delivered by higher-ranking CCP members.

Finding adequate secondary sources also proved to be a challenge. Since the war was interpreted differently by each country involved, I combined resources available at Yale, Korean national databases, and the National Library of China to get a more balanced overview. Some of these researches proved critical in formulating my research approach, a sample of which I highlight below.

While the Korean War itself has been extensively studied, the historical memory of the war is surprisingly under-researched, with the majority of English studies focusing instead on explaining the origin of the war and Chinese intervention. One promising work from this

category, however, was Allen Whiting's 1960 book, *China Crosses the Yalu*, which inspired generations of Korean War scholars by notably disagreeing with the then-popular U.S. understanding of the Korean War as an ideological war and instead arguing that China's intervention was driven primarily by security concerns, thus applying a *realpolitik* framework to the war.¹⁴³ Whiting's book was significant not only in that it revealed a key strategic goal for the CCP—protection of national interests in a non-ideological, realist sense—but also in its use of CCP propaganda material as its major primary source. That Whiting's deduction of the CCP's political goals came from propaganda speeches and news publications, and that later generations of studies on the Korean War have reinforced Whiting's seminal analysis, confirmed my conviction that commemoration speeches can be used to accurately track the CCP's objectives.

Another important group of works looks into the PRC-DPRK relations during the war and the immediately following years. Shen Zhihua's works have been the most notable on this topic.¹⁴⁴ While Shen published a number of papers in this field, his most important work would be his book with Xia Yafeng, *A Misunderstood Friendship: Mao Zedong, Kim Il-Sung, and Sino-North Korean Relations*. Here Shen and Xia trace the ups and downs of PRC-DPRK relations, marking watershed moments such as the death of Stalin and end of the Korean War, the purge of the Yan'an faction in DPRK by Kim in the mid 1950s, the Sino-Soviet split, and the detente

¹⁴³ Allen Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 159.

¹⁴⁴ Some of these works include Shen Zhihua, "Zunzhong yu yuanzhu: xin Zhongguo dui Chaoxian waijiao fangzhen de xingcheng (1950-1955)" 尊重与援助: 新中国对朝鲜外交方针的形成(1950-1955) [Respect and Aid: The Formation of the New China's Diplomatic Guideline for North Korea Relations, 1950 - 1955], *Shixue Luntan* 史学论坛, no. 6 (2015): 4-13; Shen Zhihua and Dong Jie, "Chaoxian zhanhou zhongjian yu Zhongguo de jingji yuanzhu (1954—1960)" 朝鲜战后重建与中国的经济援助(1954—1960) [Post-War Reconstruction of the DPRK and Economic Aid from China (1954-1960)], *Zhonggong Dangshi Yanjiu* 中共党史研究, no. 3 (2011): 48-57; and Shen Zhihua, "Miandui lishi jiyu: ZhongMei guanxi hejie yu ZhongChao guanxi (1971—1974)" 面对历史机遇: 中美关系和解与中朝关系(1971—1974) [Facing a Historical Opportunity: The Sino-U.S. Rapprochement and the Sino-North Korean Relations (1971—1974)], *Journal of East China Normal University*, no. 1 (2014): 1-14. doi: 10.16382/j.cnki.1000-5579.2014.01.007.

between China and the United States.¹⁴⁵ These works convinced me that PRC-DPRK relations have changed significantly over time and that the CCP would have had to readjust its narrative about its relationship with DPRK, potentially through the Korean War.

A handful of studies focus on the war mobilization efforts and public reception of such movements during the 1950s. Hajimu Masuda, for instance, explores in his book *Cold War Crucible* how the concept of the Cold War became perceived and translated into reality, and how individual understandings of the Cold War were shaped by historical memories and experiences specific to a given nation.¹⁴⁶ Regarding the Korean War, Masuda demonstrates how the Chinese people linked their bitterness toward the Japanese with their attitude toward the United States, and how that allowed for widespread war mobilization of the Chinese people.¹⁴⁷ Masuda's study also notes the Chinese people's differing responses to the Korean War after its outbreak, and how the state and masses used mobilization efforts to eliminate social and political dissent, thereby solidifying their imagined reality of the Cold War. Masuda's work offered insights into what domestic political pressure the CCP wanted to address during this period, which in turn allowed for comparison of the CCP's political objectives and propaganda messages between then and later years.

There were a few studies that directly addressed the CCP's commemoration of the Korean War, which formed the foundation of my analysis of Korean War commemoration speeches. Studies on Chinese textbook portrayals of Korea highlighted for me shifts in China's historical narrative over time, with watershed moments including U.S.-PRC normalizations and

¹⁴⁵ Shen Zhihua, and Xia Yafeng, *A Misunderstood Friendship: Mao Zedong, Kim Il-Sung, and Sino-North Korean Relations, 1949-1976* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018), 4-5.

¹⁴⁶ Hajimu Masuda, *Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2015).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

South Korea's rapid economic development.¹⁴⁸ Jung Keun-Sik's study of the Memorial of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea gave me more clarity in some political goals that the CCP was trying to accomplish through its Korean War narrative, such as state formation, nation building, and positioning China as a world power and legitimate challenger of the United States.¹⁴⁹ From these works, I learned what political and propagandistic value the CCP has attached to the Korean War, and familiarized myself with watershed events that influenced the Korean War narrative in other sources, which allowed me to compare these narratives to the changes (and lack thereof) observed in that of commemoration speeches.

Besides primary and secondary sources, there is another source of guidance which was as important as, if not more important than, my research material. I am incredibly grateful to Professor Denise Ho, whose instructions, guidance, and advice made possible not only this senior essay but also my growth as a writer and a student of history. My journey as a History major would not have been possible without Professor Fabian Drixler, whose academic advice and guidance have been invaluable throughout my time at Yale. I am thankful for the generous support by the Richard U. Light Fellowship that made my three terms in China possible. Last but not least, I am infinitely grateful to my family and friends, who have been an unwavering source of encouragement and support—across multiple time zones, from Seoul to New Haven, through thick and thin—without which this thesis would have been impossible.

¹⁴⁸ Woo Sung-min, "Singan Jungguk jungdeung yeoksagyogwaseo gaepyeon donghyangui teukjinggwa hanguksa gwallyeon seosul geomto" 신간 중국 중등 역사교과서 개편 동향의 특징과 한국사 관련 서술 검토 [A Study of the Characteristics of a Middle School History Textbook Reform in China and Reviewing Descriptions of Korean History], *The Journal of Chinese Studies* 86 (November 2018): 395-430; Yu, Yong-Tae 유용태, "Jungguk yeoksagyogwaseoui hyeondaesa insikgwa gukgajuui: hyeondae hanguksareul jungsimeuro" 중국 역사교과서의 현대사 인식과 국가주의: 현대 한국사를 중심으로 [Modern History Awareness and Nationalism in Chinese History Textbooks: Focusing on Modern Korean History], *The Korean History Education Review* 84 (December 2002): 187-222.

¹⁴⁹ Jung Keun-Sik, "China's Memory and Commemoration of the Korean War in the Memorial Hall of the 'War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea,'" *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, no. 14 (March 2015), 63-90.

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